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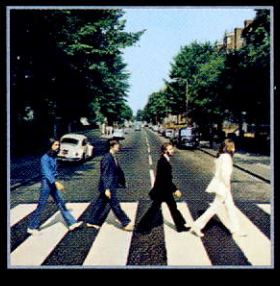

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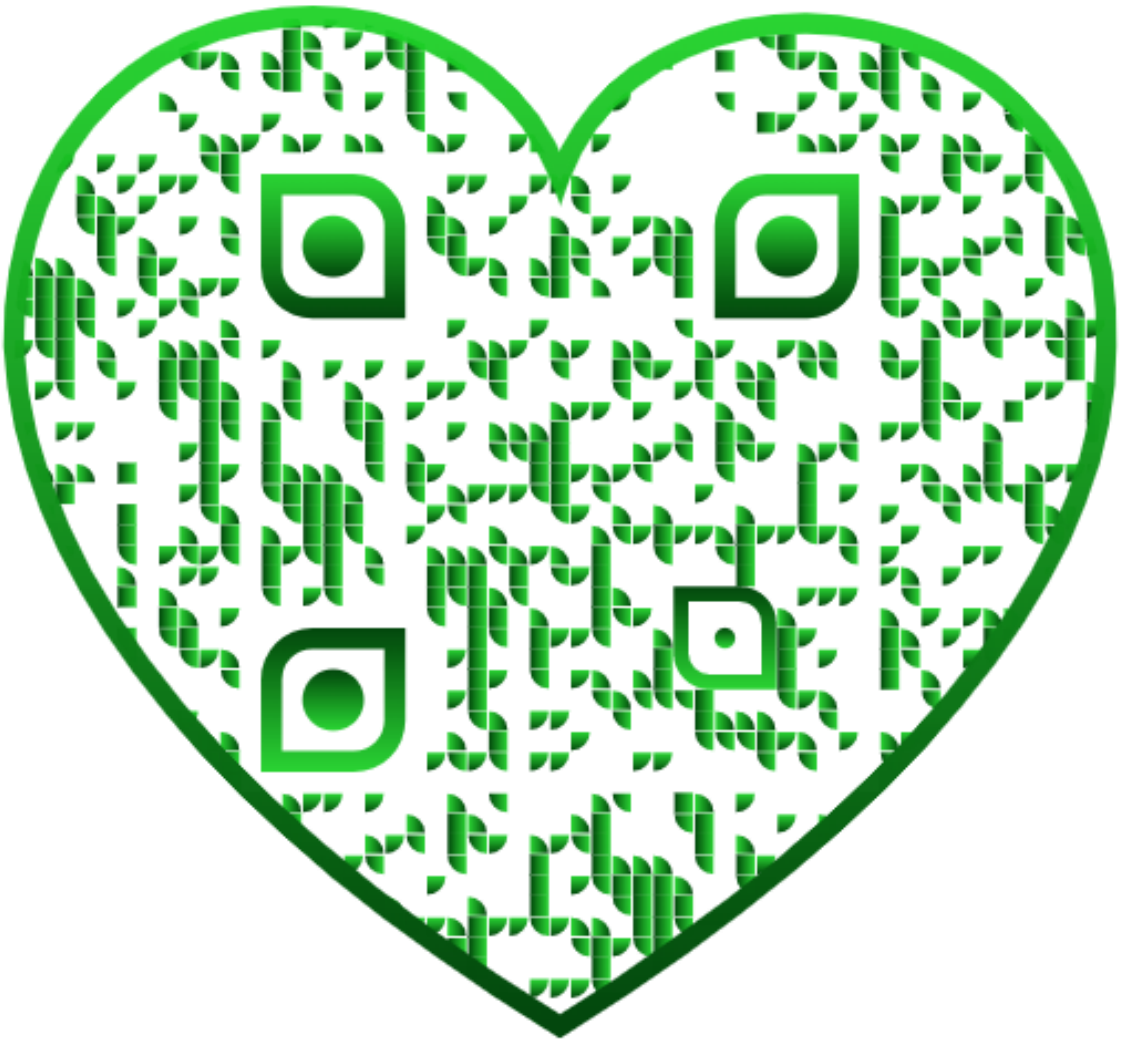

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EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES
149 5th Ave., 9th Floor, New York, NY 10010
(212) 768-2966; FAX: (212) 944-9279
EMAIL **soundingboard@guitarworld.com**
WEB PAGE **guitarworld.com**

BUSINESS
VP/PUBLISHING DIRECTOR, MUSIC **Anthony Danzi**
adanzi@futureus.com
PUBLISHER **Greg Di Benedetto**
greg@guitarworld.com
ADVERTISING SALES **Jason Perl**
646-723-5419, jperl@futureus.com
ADVERTISING SALES **Scott Sciacca**
646-723-5478, ssciacca@futureus.com
ADVERTISING SALES **Jeff Tyson**
646-723-5421, jtyson@futureus.com
AD COORDINATOR **Anna Blumenthal**
646-723-5404, anna@guitarworld.com
MARKETING MANAGER **Chris Campana**
646-723-5416, ccampana@futureus.com

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FUTURE US, INC.
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080
www.futureus.com

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NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN **Roger Parry**
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GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR **John Bowman**
Tel +44 1225 442244
www.futureplc.com

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The Beatles arrive at JFK Airport on February 7, 1964, for their American debut. (from left) Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Ringo Starr and John Lennon

EVENING STANDARD/GETTY IMAGES

ALL TOGETHER NOW

1962–1966

***In four short years**, the Beatles pulled the world under their spell, influencing everything from music to politics, sex and spirituality. They were just getting started.*

by ALAN DI PERNA

HOP STUFF: The Beatles jump for the camera in 1964. Staged press shots like this were a staple of the times, and the group frequently indulged the media's photo corps during the early years of Beatlemania.

AS CULTURAL PHENOMENA GO, the Beatles were one of the biggest happenings of the 20th century. No other band has had a greater impact on the sound, structure and overall aesthetic of rock music. Certainly, no rock band before or since has influenced extra-musical matters, including politics, spirituality and the very fabric of daily life, to the extent that the Beatles did, nor has any done so in ways that are still felt today.

Forty years have passed since John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr parted ways. Lennon died in 1980, Harrison in 2001. But clearly, the group remain as popular as ever. Witness their recently remastered catalog and *The Beatles: Rock Band* music video game—both have been among the most anticipated entertainment releases of the past year and have sold briskly since hitting store shelves. Nostalgia isn't the only reason for their success—the products are big sellers with people who were born long after the group's breakup or, for that matter, Lennon's death.

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS / REX USA

By now, the Beatles have been written about from every conceivable angle. Every day and aspect of their career has been documented in minute detail, barring trips to the toilet. Once you've absorbed all the analyses of their songs, writing and playing styles, and individual personalities, what remains most significant is that the Beatles were, first and always, a band.

In the beginning, they were a bar band, and a damned good one. They rocked the dives and roughhouse joints of Hamburg, Germany, and their native Liverpool, England, with a mixture of Fifties rock and roll, early R&B, schmaltzy standards, guitar instrumentals and girl-group pop hits. Paul did a mean Little Richard and Elvis Presley, John ripped up the Gene Vincent repertoire and channeled the somewhat more obscure R&B great Larry Williams, and George took care of the Carl Perkins numbers. Repeatedly in their later career, when the pressures of fame weighed heavily and they were stuck for a song or a new musical direction, the Beatles would go back to the music of these artists for strength and guidance...and the occasional filler track when they were short of original material.

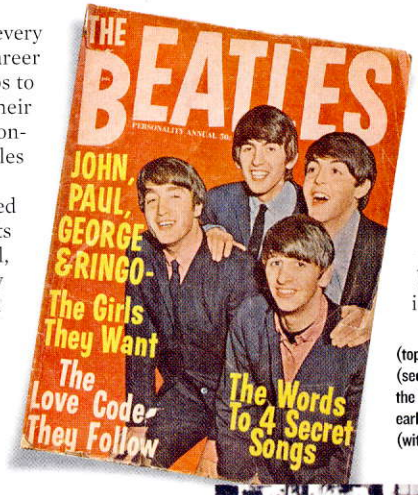
The root of their musical interest was the late Fifties music craze called skiffle, a uniquely British take on American folk music—an "anyone can do it" phenomena roughly akin to the garage-band boom of the mid Sixties. Skiffle got thousands of adolescent boys scratching away on cheap guitars. It was most likely what drove 15-year-old Paul McCartney out of the house on July 6, 1957, to see a local Liverpool skiffle group called the Quarry Men, who were fronted by a lad two years Paul's senior: John Lennon. That fateful day launched the single most influential creative partnership in all of rock history.

Lennon and McCartney's bipolar dynamic—Paul's crowd-pleasing populism versus John's confrontational iconoclasm—was the engine that drove the Beatles, and ultimately became the defining dichotomy of rock music itself. As Sir Paul himself has recently pointed out, it could not have been otherwise. While McCartney came from a stable and happy family situation, Lennon had been abandoned by his father at an early age. His mother was killed in a car crash when John was just 17, leaving him traumatized and troubled. An archetypal rock and roll rebel, Lennon had a violent streak in early life. He was good with his fists and quick to use them, but he also took refuge in verbal wit—puns, jokes, sarcasm, fantastic stories. Like many creative, verbal and emotionally vulnerable people, he used words to build a world more colorful and fanciful than conventional reality—be it drab, working-class Liverpool or even the international capitals the Beatles would later conquer. Lennon's songs and his books of witty stories and drawings afford a glimpse into that kaleidoscopic world of imagination.

When McCartney first met Lennon, John didn't know standard guitar tuning. He'd been playing in an open tuning derived from some banjo intervals that his mother had showed him. Always a bit more polished in his music skills, Paul taught John standard tuning, and the two of them started writing songs together very early on. When George Harrison joined the fold in 1958, they became, essentially, a guitar trio. Through their early years, they worked with a succession of bassists and drummers; McCartney didn't switch to playing bass guitar until 1960, when Lennon's friend Stu Sutcliffe abandoned his bass role in the Beatles to pursue art studies in Germany. Throughout the Beatles' recording career, McCartney remained the band's de facto third guitarist, playing some of the group's memorable leads and riffs.

Nineteen sixty-two was a year of momentous change. The Beatles—now consisting of Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and drummer Pete Best—had become incontestably the hottest band in Liverpool. That year, John married his girlfriend Cynthia Powell, who was pregnant with his child, and Best was replaced by Ringo Starr, a move greeted with howls of protest by Liverpool fans. Soon, though, it would hardly matter: by late 1962, the Beatles signed to EMI and released their first single, "Love Me Do."

Looking back, it's hard to imagine that something as frenzied as Beatlemania could be launched by a fairly polite record like "Love Me Do," with its moderate tempo and Lennon's mellifluous harmonica riff. Certainly, the band's repertoire featured far more raucous material, including their riotous cover of "Twist and Shout."



(top) With drummer Pete Best (second from left) in 1960 at the Liverpool Cavern Club; an early Beatles fan magazine (with reversed cover photo)

Waving to fans from the balcony of their hotel, in Melbourne, Australia, in June 1964

FROM TOP: KEYSTONE PICTURES/ZUMA PRESS; ADAM CHANDLER/HARD ROCK CAFE; NEWS LTD/NEWSPIX / REX USA

LEND ME YOUR COMB: Prepping backstage in 1964

A Beatles button, and a ticket to a pre-Fab Beatles performance at the Grosvenor Rooms, Norfolk, England, on May 17, 1963

However, the Beatles' manager, Brian Epstein, had been working to clean up their image since he took charge of their career in 1961. Besides, it was risky enough for a new group to debut with a song written by two of its own members—Lennon and McCartney—who had yet to prove their commercial viability.

Producer George Martin's decision to break with standard practice and take a chance on the newcomers' song idea was the first of his many smart production calls. For a guy with a necktie, posh accent and patrician manner, Martin proved an incredibly cool partner and ally for the Beatles throughout their recording career. He knew a good tune when he heard one, and "Love Me Do" is certainly that. There's a hint of skiffle in the rhythm and John's harmonica. But from the start, Lennon and McCartney were able to transmute their influences into something completely new. And when their two voices burst into harmony on the pre-chorus melisma, "So plea-ea-ea-ease," young girls lost control of their bodily fluids en masse. A new era of popular music and culture had begun.

The Beatles spent 1963 reducing all of young Britain to a quivering mass of adulation. Following up the success of "Love Me Do," they were let off the leash for their next single. "Please Please Me" is a rocking track with an ascending barre-chord climb reminiscent of the Everly Brothers' "Wake Up, Little Susie" and a typical bit of Lennon wordplay, using that magic word "please" three times in the chorus tag line: "Please, please me, oh yeah, like I please you." For 1963, this was titillatingly frank plea for mutual sexual satisfaction, albeit politely British.

This disc was followed by "From Me to You" (its title adapted from a newspaper advice column) and, as the year drew to an end, the two records that would unleash Beatlemania in America: "She Loves You" and "I Want to Hold Your Hand." Many Americans heard these songs for the first time when the Beatles performed them on television's *Ed Sullivan Show*, a historic broadcast that attracted a record 73 million viewers.

It's difficult today to convey just how exciting these songs sounded to young American ears. The welcomingly familiar echoes of earlier rock and roll resonated within them, but something deliciously foreign could be discerned as well. In 1964, Britain was a world away from the United States. Air travel was much less common than it is today, and world-linking technologies like satellite television or the internet were the domain of science fiction. British records and television shows weren't imported to isolationist, pre-Beatles America, despite the absence of a language barrier. Thus, while the Beatles sang English lyrics in a style highly influenced by American rock and roll, their British inflections seemed to American teens and preteens like a transmission from some other universe, one infinitely cooler than their own.

Another purely musical component of the Beatles' powerfully mesmeric effect lay in their highly inventive chord progressions and overall sense of harmonic modulation. Again, there was plenty that was familiar: relative minor changes (G to Em for instance) straight out of Fifties rock and roll, folkier G to B7 modulations from the skiffle tradition, and major-to-minor IV chord turns redolent of schmaltzy Forties and Fifties balladry. George Martin protested that the major 6th ending to "She Loves You," was hopelessly old fashioned. But to the Beatles' young audience, it was brand

TERENCE SPENCER/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA LTD; ADAM CHANDLER/HARD ROCK CAFE [BUTTON, STICKER]

COVER UP: Posing in 1965 with British pressings of their albums

ZUMA PRESS

new. The Beatles *made* it new, combining elements from pop's harmonic lexicon in incredibly novel ways.

Clearly, they'd assimilated everything of value in the crowd-pleasing repertoire of covers from their Hamburg days and distilled it through their own gifted sensibilities. Lennon and McCartney were equally resourceful at repeating ideas of their own that had worked on prior hits. The bridge modulation in "I Want to Hold Your Hand," for instance, is virtually identical to the way in which "From Me to You" moves from chorus to bridge. Razor-sharp arrangement skills clearly abetted the process. While adhering very closely to the structures of traditional pop songcraft—verses, choruses, middle eights—they put the pieces together in new ways. "She Loves You," for example, comes crashing in on the chorus, with no verse to set it up and only a frenetic Ringo tom-tom roll by way of an intro.

Another huge factor in the uniqueness of the Beatles' sound was their very British Vox AC30 amplifiers, combined with an interesting array of guitars. Lennon's main electric was a solidbody Rickenbacker 325 that he'd picked up in Hamburg back in 1960. He also made much use of a Gibson J-160E, essentially an guitar fitted with an electric guitar pickup. Harrison had a J-160E of his own that he employed on Beatles sessions, but principally he was fond of hollowbody Gretsch electrics and alternated mainly between a Country Gentleman and a Tennessean on early Beatles recordings. McCartney, of course, played his German-made Hofner 500/1

Making their U.S. television debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, February 9, 1964

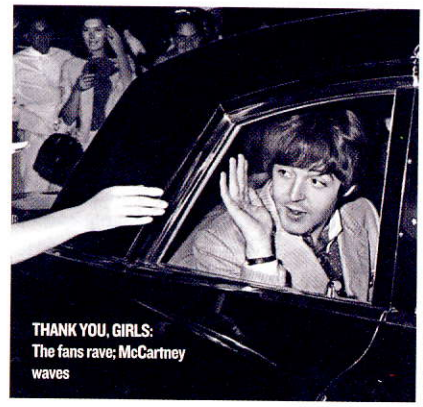
violin bass, another instrument acquired in Hamburg during the Beatles' club days.

On the business front, Brian Epstein arranged and orchestrated the Beatles' conquest of America as artfully and effectively as his "boys" put together their music. Their February '64 appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show* were followed by a deluge of singles and albums, and by the summer of that year, the Beatles' first feature film, A *Hard Day's Night*, was in theaters worldwide. Where previous rock and roll movies had been formulaic fluff, *A Hard Day's Night* drew equally from moody black-and-white European art films and eccentric British comedies to match the bold new style that the Beatles had brought to popular music. In essence, director Richard Lester created a new genre of cinema, and his directorial style precipitated many of the forms and conventions that would shape the music video era when it arrived some 16 years later.

Throughout all the hubbub—concerts, films, TV appearances, screaming fan mob scenes—Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and Starr never failed to deliver the goods, serving up a rapid succession of hit singles, each more brilliant than its predecessor. The recordings were knocked out at the rate of one or two a day, mainly in sessions at London's Abbey Road studio that were sandwiched into intervals in the Beatles' brutal touring schedule. Somehow Lennon and McCartney also found time to write hits for other people—such as "World Without Love" for Brit folk duo Peter and Gordon—and Lennon published his first book of poetry, stories and drawings, *In His Own Write*, in April 1964. Yes, the Beatles would flesh out their albums with covers gleaned from their Hamburg days, but, ironically, that afforded many young Americans their first opportunity to hear the music of Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Little Richard, Carl Perkins and other great American rock and rollers. Beatlemania gave many of these artists viability beyond their Fifties heydays.

A Beatles-badged record player from the mid Sixties

As the Beatles grew confident and comfortable in the studio, they quickly began to experiment. Their eighth single, "I Feel Fine," released in November 1964, was the first record to incorporate guitar feedback. Lennon discovered that his J-160E would start to feed back when McCartney sound-



THANK YOU, GIRLS: The fans rave; McCartney waves

FROM TOP: BERNARD GOTFRYD/GETTY IMAGES; ADAM CHANDLER/HARD ROCK CAFE; BOB WHITAKER / CAMERA PRESS / RETNA LTD.; KEVIN COLE / REX USA [MCCARTNEY]

The Beatles playing their first U.S. concert on February 11, 1964, at the Washington Coliseum, two days after appearing on the *Sullivan* show.

CENTRAL PRESS/GETTY IMAGES

THE SCREAMING OF THEIR HYSTERICAL FANS *MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO HEAR THEMSELVES ONSTAGE.*

ed a low A on his bass. He decided to use the sound as the intro to the track, an idea that George Martin approved.

The Beatles' instrumental palette was growing as well. While they were in New York for their February appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Rickenbacker president Francis Hall visited their hotel and presented George Harrison with a Rickenbacker model 360 electric 12-string. This instrument became an integral part of the Beatles' sound, Harrison putting it to inspired use on hits like "A Hard Day's Night" and "Ticket to Ride." The sound was inspirational to other rock groups, such as the Byrds, that formed in the wake of the Beatles' popularity, and spawned a whole genre of electric folk rock that lives on today.

By the time 1965 came around, a whole scene had sprung up around the Beatles. Their success gave rise to a full-scale British Invasion as English groups like the Rolling Stones, Hollies, Animals, Dave Clark Five, Yardbirds, Zombies, Who, Kinks and many others staked their claim to Top 40 charts worldwide. American groups like the Byrds, the Beau Brummels and Buffalo Springfield were quick to respond. A transatlantic dialog sprung up, the influences flowing in both directions.

The Beatles inspired American folksinger Bob Dylan to get pointy boots and an electric guitar of his own; Dylan, in turn, hooked the Beatles with the lyrical freedom that he brought to pop music. Songs didn't have to be about conventional love sentiments anymore; they could be about anything, and be any length, too. This was particularly liberating for Lennon, who had begun to chafe under the yoke of having to find clever new ways to say "I love you, baby" in song. Lennon's composition "Help!" the title track and lead single from the Beatles' 1965 second film, was a psychological S.O.S., reflecting the toll that fame and constant touring were beginning to take on him. Yet, it also played as a jaunty, lovable pop romp. The Beatles had started to become multivalent; the listener could discover multiple levels of meaning in their work.

This accelerated rate of evolution was reflected on *Rubber Soul*, which was released in December 1965. Past Beatles albums had been fairly arbitrary collections of singles and other tracks that the group had managed to put in the can in the intervals between touring. The fact that the Beatles' British and American record labels grouped the songs in markedly different album packages didn't matter that much in the early days of the Beatles' career. Rock and roll—the medium and the market—was all about singles then.

But the Beatles were soon to change that. *Rubber Soul* is their first album that has a coherent identity. While the U.S. and U.K. albums feature slightly different track listings, *Rubber Soul*, in either version, works as a collection of songs that complement one another, creating a collective mood and the sense of a musical journey as the listener moves from track to track. In

addition, acoustic guitar figures prominently on the recordings, reflecting, perhaps, Dylan's lingering influence and making *Rubber Soul* more of an introspective songwriter's album than prior Beatles albums.

It was the first album on which listeners began to get a clear sense of Lennon and McCartney's differing songwriting sensibilities. While the album features plenty of love songs from both members, the romantic sentiments are decidedly more mature and emotionally complex. Lennon comes off almost as a misogynist on several of his compositions, including "Girl," and "Run for Your Life." Meanwhile, a new level of harmonic sophistication is evidenced in touches like the oh-so-French augmented chord change in McCartney's "Michelle." Lennon's "In My Life" boasts a baroque "harpsichord" solo that is actually a piano track played by George Martin. The tape was slowed to half speed for the recording, making it sound higher in pitch and tinny when played back at normal speed.

The Beatles' era of sonic and instrumental experimentation had begun in earnest. Harrison's composition, "Think for Yourself," boasts a fuzz bass track, and Lennon's "Norwegian Wood" features a sitar played by Harrison, the first time he'd played the instrument on a recording. Harrison had discovered the instrument during the filming of *Help!*, which features Indian characters and a scene with Indian musicians. The complicated and demanding stringed instrument would lead Harrison deeply into Indian culture and spirituality.

Remarkably, *Rubber Soul* was largely written, recorded and delivered to stores in just over seven weeks. When the album's sessions began on October 12, the band had a handful of unrehearsed tunes and a deadline for the completed album to ship to stores on December 3. That they managed to squeeze in the two songs for their next single—"We Can Work It Out" and "Day Tripper"—makes the undertaking all the more remarkable. In the final days of recording, with the deadline looming, Lennon and McCartney each came up with two of the album's best tracks—"Girl" and "You Won't See Me," respectively. In the end, only one track on *Rubber Soul* originated from a different context: "Wait," which had been recorded and shelved during the sessions for *Help!*

The seeds of lyrical and musical progression that had been sown in '65

Filming the music video for their 1966 single "Rain." The group shot three videos for the song. "So I suppose, in a way, we invented MTV," Harrison remarked in the mid Nineties.

ROBERT WHITAKER/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Filming a scene for their second movie, *Help!*, in early 1965

blossomed beautifully on the Beatles' 1966 recordings. The double-sided single "Rain"/"Paperback Writer," from the summer of that year, illustrates just how far they'd come. John Lennon's lyric for "Rain" is a Zen-like meditation on the nature of reality—how perceptions are conditioned by the mind, and how dualities like rain and shine, happiness and sorrow are actually all one. It was pretty heavy stuff for a pop single. The outro features a trippy effect created by reversing the tape reels and playing the vocal backward. This was the first time such a thing had ever been done on a pop record, and few listeners knew how it had been accomplished; many more spent hours trying to decipher what Lennon was saying.

And while Lennon is typically thought of as the Beatles' literary deep thinker, the lyrical freedom of the Dylan era had a liberating effect on McCartney as well. His "Paperback Writer" lyric is nothing less than an epistolary novel crammed into a three-minute pop song. Narrative lyrics and character study would prove to be one of McCartney's strong suits in Beatles lyrics to come, such as "Penny Lane" and the elegiac "Eleanor Rigby."

In the three short years since they had arrived, the "boys" had grown up. They'd long since left provincial Liverpool and taken up residence in sophisticated London and environs. John, Ringo and George were married men by the beginning of 1966. All four had been around the world several times, tasted the good life and begun experimenting with consciousness-altering drugs. They had also formulated opinions about life, art, politics, religion...the world.

Some of these opinions caused trouble. John's comment to British journalist Maureen Cleave in 1966 that the Beatles were "more popular than Jesus now" caused controversy when an American magazine reprinted it out of context. Beatles records and merchandise were publicly burned and banned in America's deep South Bible Belt, apartheid South Africa and other centers of religious intolerance.

On the whole, 1966 was a difficult year for the Beatles. Their first visit to Japan was marred by virulent protests on the part of cultural conservatives who felt that the rock band's performances at Nippon Budokan Hall constituted a defamation of a sacred space that had hitherto only been used for karate

I'M LOOKING THROUGH YOU: *Rubber Soul*–period Beatles, 1965

TOP: GEORGE KONIG / REX USA; BELOW: APPLE CORPS LTD 2009

matches. On tour in the Philippines, the Beatles, Brian Epstein and crew members were roughed up in a Manila airport after having supposedly snubbed an invitation from national dictator Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda. Touring had become unbearable.

Yet, in the midst of all this turmoil, the Beatles were able to create one of their greatest albums ever. (Many consider it *the* greatest.) Released in August, *Revolver* is both the culmination of the Beatles' first phase—their pop years—and a record that leads the way into the more open-ended psychedelia of the second half of their career. Among other things, it is the Beatles album that features George Harrison's compositions most prominently. The disc kicks off with his acerbic, satirical "Taxman," which boasts a ripping guitar solo by Paul McCartney, who played his recently acquired Epiphone Casino semihollow electric. Harrison and Lennon also acquired Casinos around this time, and the instrument would come to be closely associated with Lennon in the late Sixties and early Seventies. For the *Revolver* sessions, McCartney made extensive use of his "other signature bass," a Rickenbacker 4001S, which he had begun using on *Rubber Soul*. A number of Fender amplifiers, including a Bassman and two blackface Showman amps, augmented the Beatles' Vox amps on *Revolver*.

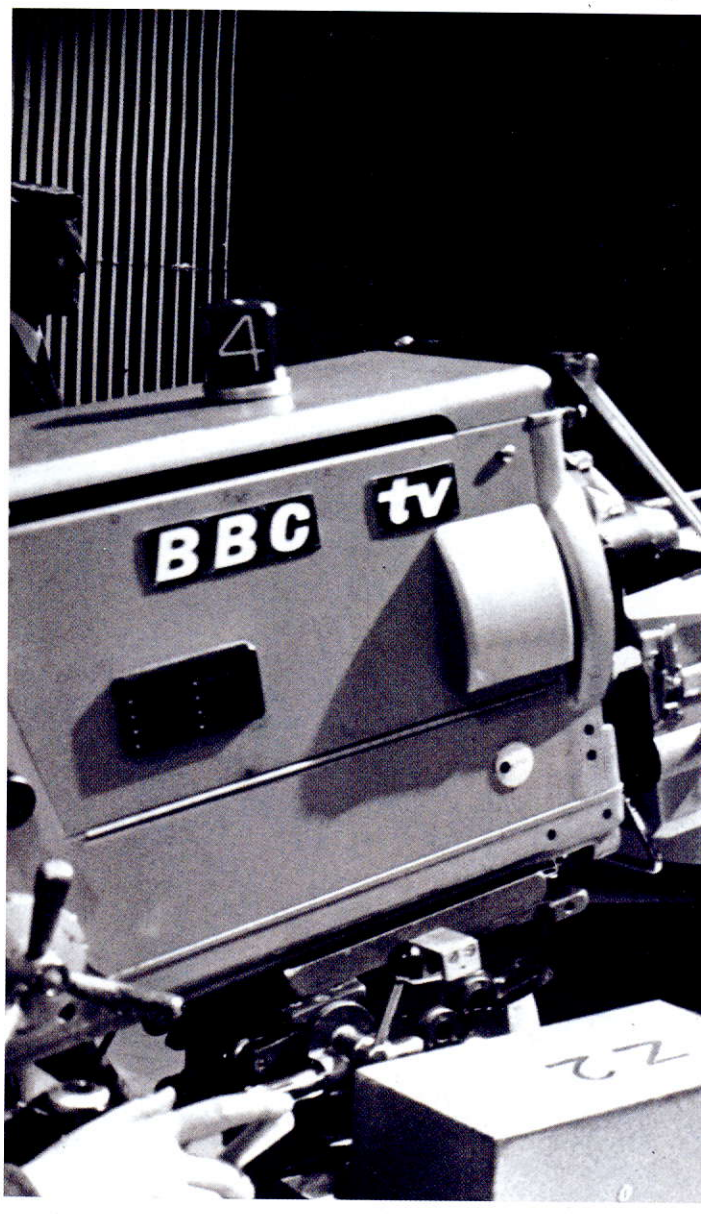
A Beatles commemorative token marking the years 1965-1966

Harrison's deepening absorption of Indian musical tradition is reflected on another of his *Revolver* compositions, the droning, raga-like "Love to You." This hypnotic dharma distillation is buoyed by guest musician Anil Bhagwat's supple tabla rhythms. For a long time it was thought that Harrison himself played sitar on the track, but recent Beatles scholarship has unearthed evidence that Ayana Deva Angadi, a friend of George's from North London's Asian Music Society, may have performed the part.

Harrison's third contribution to *Revolver*, "I Want to Tell You," serves as a reminder that he could cook up a pop track worthy of inclusion alongside Lennon/McCartney's best. Still, he deliberately undermines the song's pop appeal with an insistently atonal piano chord—a musical manifestation of his gently perverse sense of humor.

McCartney's pop sensibilities shoot exploratory tendrils in all directions on *Revolver*. His blissful "Good Day Sunshine" draws on the British music hall tradition that had been popular with his parents' generation. The influence had lain dormant during the first phase of the band's career, but from this point forward, it would prove a rich source of inspiration for McCartney, who freely borrowed from it for songs like "Your Mother Should Know," "Honey Pie" and "Maxwell's Silver Hammer."

In addition, his songs "Eleanor Rigby" and "For No One" continue the vein of introspective, sepia-toned pop balladry that McCartney had pioneered on earlier hits like "Yesterday," while his uptempo "Got to Get You Into My Life" is an excursion into brassy R&B territory. Providing tart counterpoint to McCartney's *Revolver* contributions, Lennon's pop sensibilities manifest in more sardonic songs like "Dr. Robert," "And Your Bird Can Sing" and "I'm Only Sleeping" (the latter featuring a notable backward tape guitar solo), not to



At Budokan, July 1, 1966. (from left, top) Rickenbacker 4001S bass and 360/12, Gibson J-160E; (bottom) Epiphone Casinos, Gibson SG and Hofner bass

TOP LEFT: ADAM CHANDLER/HARD ROCK CAFE; BOTTOM: BOB WHITAKER/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

On Britain's *Top of the Pops*, June 16, 1966, where they mimed to their latest songs, "Paperback Writer" and "Rain"

mention the cryptically mystical "She Said She Said."

Lennon's tour de force on *Revolver*, however, is the closing track, "Tomorrow Never Knows," which combines elements of sitar-induced trance with avant-garde tape manipulation, prepared piano and other musique concrète techniques that had never before been applied to rock music. The result is a soundscape simultaneously ominous and seductive. On the song's latter half, Lennon's voice is processed through a Leslie rotary-speaker cabinet, an effect that gives it the eerie authority of an ageless guru speaking from a remote Himalayan cave.

THE BEATLES HAD COME A LONG WAY FROM "YEAH YEAH YEAH," *AND THEY'D TAKEN ALL OF WESTERN CULTURE WITH THEM.*

In three short years, the Beatles had come a long way from the "yeah yeah yeah" refrain from "She Loves You," and they'd taken all of Western popular culture along with them. Their own lives were rapidly transforming. On November 9, 1966, John Lennon met artist Yoko Ono at a private preview of an exhibit devoted to her work at London's Indica Gallery. It was the start of a creative and romantic partnership that brought Lennon's first marriage to an end but opened him up to bold new modes of expressive freedom.

Some three months earlier, on August 29, 1966, the Beatles played their last concert, at San Francisco's Candlestick Park, having decided to retire from live performance. While their studio work had evolved at an astounding rate, the screaming of their hysterical fans made it impossible for them to hear themselves onstage in those days of primitive P.A. systems. Even if they had been able to, the pressures of getting in and out of venues without being crushed to death by hysterical fans, not to mention the "anti-Beatle" protests and death threats, were hardly conducive to creativity.

For any musical artist to maintain a career without playing live was unheard of in 1966. But the Beatles had resolved to use their formidable studio craft to create something every bit as large, colorful and three dimensional as the live concert experience. That was a pretty tall order at a time when four-track recording was state of the art and home entertainment media like video and DVD were still decades away.

But if anyone could pull it off, the Beatles could. And they would, beginning in 1967 with the brilliant *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. It was the beginning of an entirely new period in the history of the Beatles—and, if follows, for pop music culture. ❖

CUMMINGS ARCHIVES/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

SOMETHING IN THE AIR

At the dawn of 1967, *with the world on the brink of a cultural revolution, the Beatles entered a heady and unpredictable phase of innovative songwriting and individual expression.*

BY ALAN DI PERNA

THE BEATLES ENDED 1966 by announcing their retirement from live concert performances. Henceforth, they would not only concentrate on studio recordings but also use the studio to create something that transcended even the excitement of a live rock concert. It seemed an extravagant claim, but in February 1967, they made good on it with the release of "Strawberry Fields Forever"/"Penny Lane," one of the most revolutionary pop singles ever released.

On the road for *Magical Mystery Tour* in 1967

APPLE CORPS LTD 2009

From the first notes, it's clear that the Beatles had come upon a whole new mode of expression. The track's opening figure was played by Paul McCartney using the flute preset on a Mellotron, a keyboard that employed analog tape recordings to recreate the sound of real instruments. At the time, the general public had no idea what a Mellotron was. To them the sound was vaguely familiar yet profoundly, almost disquietingly, alien.

The intro gives way to one of John Lennon's most memorable choruses ever: "Let me take you down, 'cause I'm going to Strawberry Fields. Nothing is real. And nothing to get hung about." There's an incredible gentleness to the music's swaying cadence. Lennon's voice is suffused with a delicious sense of lassitude—opiated, dreamlike. "Strawberry Fields" knocks you down with a feather. Its tremendous power doesn't come from any hitherto recognized form of rock and roll energy, nor does its gentleness have anything to do with the stylized sentiments of conventional love balladry. Even today, it is something utterly unique.

"Strawberry Fields" incorporates nearly every trick and technique the Beatles had learned over the course of their previous recording career, not to mention all the sonic resources of EMI's Abbey Road studio. Creating the track entailed brilliantly resourceful tape manipulation, deft string and brass orchestrations by George Martin, and exotic instrumentation that includes an Indian surmandal (swordmandel), a zither-like instrument played by George Harrison to set up the song's hallucinogenic verses. It borders on miraculous that this was accomplished with nothing more than four-track tape recording technology.

"Strawberry Fields" was assembled from two takes of the song, each of which featured drastically different arrangements, as well as dissimilar tempos and pitches, from the other. By carefully adjusting the speed of each take, Martin was able to effect a match when the two versions were spliced together one minute into the song. The sense of artificiality that arises from studio techniques like these is an integral part of the song's mood and message. As on earlier songs like "Rain," Lennon is once again questioning the very nature of existence. Not for the first time, nor the last, he's offering the suggestion that "nothing is real."

The lyric came from Lennon's childhood memories of a place in Liverpool, the wooded parkland surrounding the Strawberry Field Salvation Army Home. But for Lennon, the elusive texture of memory becomes the jumping-off point for a poetic inquiry into identity itself. Is the "I" that is remembering the same "I" that had the original experiences?

"Always know sometimes think it's me," Lennon sings. "But you know I know when it's a dream." The verse syntax is disjointed, uncertain, tentative... Everyone knows that the Beatles, like a lot of people in 1967, had begun to experiment with mind-expanding drugs like LSD. At the same time, the Beatles were beginning to look into Hindu-based yogic teachings in which conventional reality is described as *Maya*—illusion. These teachings maintain that a more fundamental, transcendent, "truer" truth lies beyond.

The Beatles had discovered that the recording studio itself can be a medium for arriving at the truth of a song: that by exploring alternate takes, tape edits and by adding and subtracting overdubs, it is possible to uncover a song's definitive essence. This process is analogous to a painter adding and subtracting layers of color from a canvas or an author experimenting with different words, characters or points of view in a novel or poem. And from this came an exciting new sense that pop music could be just as much an art form as painting, poetry or any other serious mode of creative expression. This idea has been much abused in the years since 1967, but at the time, it was almost shockingly liberating. Henceforth, musicians could *play* the recording studio.

Whatever it was, "Strawberry Fields" was too much for some longtime Beatlemaniacs. Fans who wanted John, Paul, George and Ringo to remain lovable mop tops had a hard time with the song. Not even McCartney's jaunty "Penny Lane" on the flip side could convince some of them to buy this strange new record. Adding insult to injury, the single's picture sleeve featured a photo in which John, Paul and Ringo sported moustaches while George wore a full beard. Rock groups weren't supposed to have facial

In the sun room at McCartney's house in St. John's Wood, on July 28, 1968, with the bassist's sheepdog, Martha, in attendance

ZUMA PRESS

hair; it wasn't cute. For many, the newly hirsute Beatles just looked old and serious. For a second time in pop culture history, the Beatles' tonsorial choices had caused a stir.

But of course many other Beatles fans, both old and new, devoted entire days of the year 1967 to playing "Strawberry Fields" over and over again, completely entranced as they tried to penetrate its mysteries. Yet, astounding as it is, "Strawberry Fields" was a mere aperitif—a tantalizing hint of what was to come next. Four months later, the Beatles presented *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* to the world.

Sgt. Pepper's is routinely cited as one of the greatest rock records of all time. While it is not the first rock concept album—Frank Zappa's 1966 *Freak Out* is generally accorded that title—*Sgt. Pepper's* introduced the idea that a rock album could have characters and, if not a plot, certainly a beginning, middle and end. All the great narrative or conceptual albums in the rock canon—the Who's *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*, the Pretty Things' *S.F. Sorrow*, the Kinks' *Arthur*, Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, Marilyn Manson's *Antichrist Superstar*, and so on—have this in common with *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

IN A MOMENT OF COSMIC SYNCHRONICITY, THE RELEASE OF SGT. PEPPER'S *COINCIDED WITH THE SUMMER OF LOVE.*

With *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, the Beatles pioneered the idea that a rock album could have its own structural integrity and, thus, be something more than an ad hoc collection of hits and "filler." With *Sgt. Pepper's*, they took this to a new level of sophistication, making good on their promise to do something new with the medium. After *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the two-sided vinyl rock album would henceforth be a classic form, like the Shakespearian sonnet or the orchestral symphony in four movements. Countless musical artists would be inspired by the creative strategies the Beatles employed for sequencing songs, pacing, creating transitions and building recurring motifs into their music and lyrics.

As if to dramatize and confirm the new artistic direction the Beatles had taken, the album's graphics and opening track created a playful fictive identity for the group, transforming them into the somewhat archaic yet colorfully clad Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band. It's an old-fashioned-sounding name, suggestive of aging spinsters and Salvation Army rallies, but psychedelicized recontextualizations of antique Victoriana were very much a part of the Beatles' milieu at this point in time. The album marked the first time that the cover artwork was an integral part of the overall musical experience. The original release even included cardboard cutouts of the Sgt. Pepper's logo with its antique lettering, military stripes and a badge depicting the Sergeant himself. It is also the first Beatles album to feature printed lyrics to all the songs on the album sleeve, a tacit indication that these were words worthy of contemplation. Additionally, *Sgt. Pepper's* was the first Beatles album where the U.S. song selection and running order is the same as the U.K. disc. Even the corporate powers of Capitol Records could recognize there was an inviolable form to *Sgt. Pepper's* that should not be tampered with.

The opening track seamlessly segues from driving rock to oom-pah brass band camp. It also sets up the next number, "A Little Help from My Friends," introducing Ringo as the fictitious band's fictitious singer, Billy Shears. Ringo's vocal turn had been a standard ingredient on Beatles albums right from the beginning, but here it's folded into the overall concept, a formalized confirmation of the longtime fan's expectation that, yes, Ringo's gonna sing one.

After this, however, there is no real conceptual link between the tunes (although interpreters over the years have been highly imaginative in uncovering threads). The body of the album is mainly, and simply, about presenting brilliant songs performed and produced brilliantly. Lennon's at his trippiest on the expansively imagistic "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," and his "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" superimposes some first-rate aural collage work, including tape loops of circus organs, over a lyric inspired by an antique circus poster. "She's Leaving Home" is one of McCartney's most poignant narrative ballads, orchestrated for a string quartet. His British music hall influence emerges, once again, on "When I'm Sixty-Four," and he squeezes off a ripping guitar solo on "Good Morning, Good Morning," playing through a very English Selmer Zodiac amp.

Harrison weighs in with one his most profound and beautifully realized Indian-inspired tracks, "Within You Without You," playing sitar and acoustic guitar with a group of Indian musicians and yet another outstanding George Martin orchestration. Harrison's tamboura drones decorate "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and "It's Getting Better," and, of course, his superb lead guitar work is all over the disc.

An uptempo organ-driven reprise of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band" brings a sense of thematic closure to the album. But then there's a postscript. "A Day in the Life" is another landmark Beatles recording. Lennon's wistful ballad is eerily prophetic, a rumination on the death of a public figure. It was McCartney's idea to follow Lennon's "I'd love to turn you on" refrain with a dramatic orchestral crescendo that had each member of a 40-piece ensemble ascending chromatically at his or her own pace. After the first crescendo, the song cuts abruptly to a McCartney song fragment, the perky "Woke up, fell out of bed" section. Without abandoning the beautifully turned verses, choruses and bridges of pop song structure, the Beatles were finding new ways to open these forms up. Back in 1967, fans sat spellbound as the final, resounding piano chord of "A Day in the Life" faded out, listening intently as the sound receded into silence, keen to pick up any overtones or buried messages, as if meditating on a sacred mantra.

In a moment of cosmic synchronicity, the release of *Sgt. Pepper's* coincided with the Summer of Love, the apotheosis of the worldwide hippie movement that had San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district as its de facto capitol. While they had no formal agenda, hippies advocated peace, free love, equality of the races and sexes, exploration of consciousness through psychedelic drugs and/or spiritual practice and, perhaps most of all, freedom of mind, body and soul. Rock music was the culture's predominant art form, and the Beatles in their new creative incarnation seemed the perfect embodiment of hippie counterculture ideals. In many ways they were the ultimate rock band for the new era that was dawning.

Their next single seemed to confirm this. "All You Need Is Love" is a blast of pure Flower Power. Following the opening strains of the French national anthem—a bit of absurdist cognitive dissonance—the word "love" is sung nine successive times in gorgeous harmony over a simple descending chordal backing. As the blissful, mantra-like refrain—which has been likened to "Three Blind Mice"—repeats, and Lennon starts spinning verse lyrics

Shooting the video for "Strawberry Fields Forever"

JANE BOWN / CAMERA PRESS / RETNA LTD.

that seem like Zen koans: "There's nothing you can do that can't be done. There's nothing you can sing that can't be sung..."

As early as "The Word" from *Rubber Soul*, Lennon had been playing with the dual sense of the word love: the commonplace subject of boy/girl pop songs on the one hand and the elevated concept of universal love on the other. With "All You Need Is Love," he placed his focus squarely on the latter definition, his flinty verse tautologies keeping the mind engaged and leaving the heart free to wallow in the sheer hippie bliss of it all.

"All You Need Is Love" features an extended outro, a device the Beatles employed in "Strawberry Fields" and would use again in "I Am the Walrus" and "Hey Jude." It was one more way in which they opened up pop song structures during this period, transforming a hitherto minor element of pop arrangement into a full-blown art statement. The "All You Need Is Love" outro is an aural collage, with bits of the old English ballad "Greensleeves" and the big band standard "In the Mood" woven into the swirling sonic construct, as if all the songs and sounds in the universe were converging into one. McCartney chimes in with the chorus line from "She Loves You," making his own wry comment on the contrast, and continuity, between the "silly love songs" of the Beatles' pop era and the expanded love consciousness of their psychedelic phase.

"All You Need Is Love" was aptly chosen for inclusion in the first-ever global satellite broadcast, which took place on June 25, 1967, linking some 27 countries on five continents. The Beatles' segment of the show originated from Abbey Road, where the quartet performed "All You Need Is Love" with a full orchestra and a supporting cast of superstar friends that included Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Marianne Faithfull, Keith Moon, Eric Clapton and Graham Nash, sitting cross-legged at the Beatles' feet and joining in on the "love is all you need" outro refrain. The broadcast reached some 400,000 viewers. It was kind of similar to the Beatles' legendary *Ed Sullivan* appearances, but on a global scale. By 1967, the Beatles had begun to learn that they could harness the power of their fame to beam messages beneficial to humanity all across the world.

The euphoria of that magic night was short lived, however. Two months later, on August 27, longtime Beatles manager Brian Epstein was found dead in his London home, the victim of a drug overdose; no one knew if it was intentional, accidental or the result of foul play. Epstein's death was a heavy emotional blow to the Beatles. Brian had been with them since 1961 and had guided them all through their frantic and unprecedented rise to fame. After some deliberation, the Beatles decided they would manage themselves from that point onward. It was a daunting and unprecedented move, perhaps, but this was an era of experimentation in all aspects of life. A lot of people were moving into new and uncharted territories.

The shortcomings of their decision became apparent on the Beatles' very first project without Epstein. The *Magical Mystery Tour* television film was Paul McCartney's idea. He thought it would be a brilliant lark for the Beatles to take a busload of friends into the West Country of England, film whatever transpired and make a TV special out of it. Film and TV were a key part of the Beatles' strategy for maintaining a bond with their fans in the absence of live shows. By late 1965, they'd already begun shooting film clips for their singles as a way of cutting down on live television appearances. These had grown even more inventive with the surrealistic "Strawberry Fields" clip. The "All You Need Is Love" satellite broadcast had been a success too. But *Magical Mystery Tour* would not prove so fortunate.

In the absence of Epstein's tight organizational skills, the project moved forward without proper scheduling, budgeting or even a shooting script. Completing *Magical Mystery Tour* took considerably more time and money than had been anticipated. When the show debuted in Britain—the day after Christmas 1967—it was denounced as rubbish by a quorum of influential critics. ABC-TV in America backed out of airing the film in the States after it bombed in England. A soundtrack album was released in the U.S., and while it brought some fine new songs ("The Fool on the Hill," "Your Mother Should Know"), it lacked the cohesive authority of *Sgt. Pepper's* and paled by comparison with that bellwether record. At the start of 1967, it had looked like the Beatles could do no wrong. Now they were faced with the first flop of their career.

Early 1968 was perhaps an ideal time for the Beatles to retreat to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram in Rishikesh, India, to study the guru's Transcendental Meditation technique. The group had been with the Maharishi in Wales when they received the news of Brian Epstein's depth. Now they decided to join the yogi on his peaceful, serene home turf. Of the quartet, George and John were most behind the idea, and they spent 11 weeks at the ashram. Paul stayed nine weeks, while Ringo bailed after 11 days, saying he was bored and also unhappy with the food. At Rishikesh, the Beatles were joined by a coterie of stars that included Beach Boy Mike Love, Scottish pop balladeer Donovan and actress Mia Farrow.

Through regular meditation, Lennon, McCartney and Harrison found new songwriting ideas coming in a torrent. Many would take form on their next album, 1968's double-disc set *The Beatles*, a.k.a. the White Album. During their time together at Rishikesh, Donovan taught Lennon and McCartney how to fingerpick, tutoring John especially on a Gibson J-45 acoustic. This discovery accounts for the abundance of acoustic guitar–driven songs on the White Album, including McCartney's "Blackbird" and "I Will," and Lennon's "Julia" and "Mother Nature's Son." Around this time, John and Paul both acquired Martin D-28 acoustics, which were used extensively on the record.

THROUGH REGULAR MEDITATION AT THE MAHARISHI'S INDIA RETREAT, *NEW SONGWRITING IDEAS CAME TO THE BEATLES IN A TORRENT.*

But the White Album is no mere collection of folk ballads; it also contains some of the most raw and edgy recordings the Beatles would ever make. The album displays a tremendous range of material, and while the record lacks the taut structural unity of *Sgt. Pepper's*, that seems to be precisely the point. The White Album is, in many ways, the antithesis of *Sgt. Pepper's*. Its plain white cover stands in stark, and seemingly deliberate, contrast to *Sgt. Pepper's* ornate, high-concept graphics. This fact was so striking when the album was first released, in November 1968, that it was almost immediately dubbed the White Album. If *Sgt. Pepper's* is the Platonic ideal for the concept album, then the White Album is the universal template for the rock double album.

The two-disc format afforded the Beatles much room in which to experiment. This is perhaps one more reflection of the fact that Brian Epstein was no longer on hand to rein them in. The White Album was the band's first release on their own post-Epstein Apple label. George Martin's suggestion to pare the record down to a single disc was overruled. So the White Album is laced with silly studio jams like "Wild Honey Pie," all-out art projects like Lennon's musique concrète sound collage "Revolution 9," Ringo's first public stab at songwriting with the country-flavored "Don't Pass Me By" and unabashed joke songs like McCartney's "Why Don't We Do It in the Road."

All this comes off delightfully because it is bracketed with enough

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

HOLY SHIFT: The Beatles in India with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in March 1968. Among the group are the Beatles' wives, roadie Mal Evans (third from right) and Beach Boy Mike Love (far right).

At Abbey Road Studios for the "All You Need Is Love" television transmission, the world's first live satellite broadcast, June 25, 1967

BELOW: JANE BOWN / CAMERA PRESS / RETNA LTD.

inspired, gloriously realized "real" songs to fill a single album and a half. A whole new stylistic mode started to emerge from John Lennon on the White Album. For one thing, he began to revisit his Fifties rock and roll roots, recontextualizing them in ironic and acerbic new ways to create prickly classics like "Revolution 1" and "Happiness Is a Warm Gun." As songs like these made abundantly clear, Lennon had become openly political in his songwriting as well. This was in part a reflection of the times, as the euphoria of 1967's Summer of Love gave way to increasing anger and outrage as the United States' unsuccessful military action in Vietnam dragged on.

But some of Lennon's aggressive new political stance was due to his new relationship with Yoko Ono, the artist whom he'd met in 1966 and who had become his lover and life partner. Yoko encouraged John to use his Beatle star power to strike artistic blows against military, political and corporate oppression. Not that the rebellious Lennon needed much pushing. Yoko can be heard singing on "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill," Lennon's humorous diatribe against hunting in particular and the white male phallocentric obsession with guns in general.

The Beatles in 1967, and (opposite) their *Yellow Submarine* characters, which were based on the group's appearance from this period

A flirtation with heroin was another aspect of John and Yoko's open, experimental relationship. "Skag" was a slang term for the drug back then, and the adjective "skaggy" seems to fit some of Lennon's work on the White Album—the dark verse imagery in "Happiness Is a Warm Gun," for instance, or the nodding-out ennui of "I'm So Tired." But John wasn't the only one getting down and dirty on the White Album. McCartney goes all-out shrill and revs up the distortion on his "Helter Skelter," thought to be a parody of the Who, known at the time for their explosive, feedback-frenzied live shows. The aforementioned "Why Don't We Do It in the Road" was interpreted as a send-up of the Rolling Stones' raunchy, 12-bar blues aesthetic. And of course the White Album kicks off with McCartney's rocking, and even subtly political, classic "Back in the U.S.S.R.," with its Beach Boys–inspired bridge.

The White Album's broad, double-disc canvas gave Harrison plenty of room to shine as well. As his spiritual practice deepened, and as he found other outlets for his interest in Indian music—such as his 1968 soundtrack for the film *Wonderwall*—Harrison became a little less inclined to express these aspects of his life in his work with the Beatles. Instead he got back to writing great rock songs, like the White Album's horn-driven "Savoy Truffle" and the yearning classic "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." For the latter track, Harrison brought in his friend Eric Clapton to lay down lead guitar.

The White Album's sprawling, rough-edged vibe was also a reflection of the Beatles' troubled internal dynamic at the time. Although they'd stopped touring in 1966, their enormous fame continued to be a source of pressure and stress. More than ever, McCartney and Lennon were working in isolation from each other. Harrison went so far as to suggest that inflated egos were what made the White Album a double set: with relations strained to the breaking point, no one dared to suggest that a marginal song be omitted from the album. Paul, George and Ringo also resented Yoko Ono's presence in the studio and at Lennon's side throughout the sessions, not to mention her unstintingly vocal critiques of the work in progress. At one point Ringo quit the band, storming out of the studio but returning to the fold a few weeks later.

January 1969 saw the release of the soundtrack to *Yellow Submarine*, an animated feature loosely based on the *Revolver* track "Yellow Submarine" and the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's* personae. The Beatles had little to do with the project, outside of contributing a few half-hearted new songs to what was essentially another collection of old hits, packaged with George Martin's orchestral score for the film.

But while the cartoon Beatles clowned around onscreen, the real Beatles were arguing frequently and spending time apart. Their Apple empire was in an alarming state of disarray. Ambitiously, the group had attempted to expand its company into a range of creative interests, including two record labels (Apple and, for experimental releases, Zapple), a recording studio, a clothing boutique and related business ventures. But creative artists are rarely good businessmen and, sadly, the Beatles were no exception. The spirit of hippie utopianism that guided Apple's course had made the Beatles sitting ducks for every con artist, sharp dealer, sham shaman and delusional kook in creation. The company's problems began to turn the Beatles against one another.

It was McCartney who tried to pull the group's members together again. Hoping to rekindle the energy and solidarity of the Beatles' Hamburg days, he suggested that the Beatles return to their roots by playing a concert, or several concerts, as a self-contained quartet once again. Soon, the idea expanded to include a film crew who would document the proceedings. While the band entertained various, and mostly wildly unrealistic, proposals as to where and how this performance might take place, director Michael Lindsay-Hogg started shooting rehearsals, which took place throughout the month of January 1969.

TIMES A-CHANGIN': Lennon and Ono at a Bob Dylan concert in 1969

Things did not go smoothly. George Harrison walked out on January 10 and only returned on the condition that any and all plans for a live concert be abandoned. The other Beatles accepted his proposal to work on a new album instead, one which they would record live in the studio, without overdubs. With the cameras still rolling, sessions commenced at the Beatles new—and as yet unfinished—Apple recording studio, in the basement of Apple's

TOP: JAN OLOFSSON/REDFERNS/GETTY; BOTTOM: BENTLEY ARCHIVE/POPPERFOTO/GETTY IMAGES

London business HQ. For the first time in the Beatles' career, George Martin was not in the control room. Instead, up-and-coming producer Glyn Johns was at the helm. In addition, Harrison brought in keyboard great Billy Preston, whom the Beatles had met and befriended in Hamburg when he was performing with Little Richard. Preston, Harrison reasoned, would be a helpful addition if the group was to stick by its plans to record without overdubs. Furthermore, he would help keep the peace among the frazzled Fab Four.

Despite the good intentions, the project failed to reinvigorate the group. Between sessions at Apple and London's Olympic studio, the Beatles managed to put some songs in the can. But what had by now been termed the *Get Back* project eventually disappeared into limbo. Glyn Johns' carefully prepared mixes and running orders were repeatedly rejected by the Beatles. Lennon would later comment that the problem didn't lay with Johns' audio abilities but with the substandard material he'd been presented with. For now, the project's fruits were limited to a single: McCartney's catchy but slight "Get Back," paired with Lennon's R&B-flavored "Don't Let Me Down."

Before abandoning the project, the four Beatles and Preston ascended to the roof of Apple's Savile Row office to play an impromptu half-hour set for Lindsay-Hogg's camera crew and passersby in the crowded lunchtime streets below, who could hear the music but barely catch a glimpse at who was making it. Someone called the cops and the plug was pulled. This was to be the Beatles' last public performance, though no one realized it at the time.

Not that it would have been hard to guess. By this point, business differences had broken out among the Beatles, rubbing salt into the creative lacerations that had opened up between them. Finally realizing that they couldn't make a go of it without professional management, Lennon, Harrison and Starr had opted to sign with New York music biz veteran Allen Klein. McCartney opposed the move and wanted to entrust the Beatles business to Eastman and Eastman, a New York law firm headed by the family of his new love, rock photographer Linda Eastman. The two were married on March 12 of 1969, just eight days before John and Yoko were united in wedlock, John's divorce from his first wife Cynthia having gone through some four months earlier.

In Amsterdam, Lennon and Ono used the publicity generated by their marriage to make a creative plea for world peace via their famous Bed-In, and followed it up by holding a similar event in Montreal. John immor-

FLOODING THE MARKET: ***Yellow Submarine*** **merchandise included everything from puzzles to lunch boxes to alarm clocks.**

TOP: EVERETT COLLECTION; RIGHT: ADAM CHANDLER/HARD ROCK CAFE

talized the couple's travails on the next Beatles single, "The Ballad of John and Yoko." While credited to the Beatles, it is actually a Lennon and McCartney performance, with McCartney handling drums, bass, piano and backing vocals as Lennon took charge of all guitar and lead vocal duties.

While they could still coexist in the same studio, Lennon and McCartney had each started moving into solo mode by the late Sixties. The Beatles' superb 1968 single "Hey Jude" had introduced the piano balladeer persona that would anchor McCartney's solo career in the Seventies and beyond. Lennon followed suit with "The Ballad of John and Yoko," a single that introduced the self-dramatization, hollow slap-echo vocal sound and stripped-down arrangement style of Lennon's solo work.

In mid 1969, with the Beatles still mired in disharmony, McCartney once again proposed a solution: avoiding the gimmicks and creative schemes that had made a mess of both *Magical Mystery Tour* and the *Get Back* sessions, he suggested the group's members put aside their personal differences long enough to record a disciplined, song-driven album along the lines of *Sgt. Pepper's* and the Beatles' other classic albums. He then approached George Martin, whose creative talents had been roundly subordinated on the *Get Back* sessions, and asked if he would produce it? "Yes, if I am *really* allowed to produce it," Martin recalls saying.

The sessions, which got seriously organized in the latter half of 1969, produced the Beatles' final masterpiece, *Abbey Road*. While perhaps not quite as adventurous as *Sgt. Pepper's*, the disc is sonically inventive and packed with great tunes. *Abbey Road* finds Lennon still entrenched in his Fifties rock and roll roots. His "Come Together," which opens the album, takes Chuck Berry's "You Can't Catch Me" on a wild, free-associative ride through darker places. And John's "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" revisits the raw blues mode of the White Album's "Yer Blues," here juxtaposing it with passages of minor guitar chord sturm und drang.

ROOF OR CONSEQUENCES: The Beatles performing on top of Apple Corps during the Get Back sessions, in London, January 30, 1969. It was their last public performance.

McCartney also tips his hat to Fifties rock and roll on the Fats Domino–inspired "Oh! Darling," and his "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" brilliantly combines Paul's music hall proclivities with his gift for narrative lyrics. Meanwhile Ringo has one of his best vocal turns ever on his own composition, "Octopus' Garden." *Abbey Road* is a particularly strong album for George Harrison. His song "Something" is one of the best love ballads in the entire Beatles canon. The track, which did much to introduce the sound of electric guitar through an organ Leslie cabinet to rock and roll, was selected as a single from *Abbey Road*. "Something" has become a standard, as has George's other *Abbey Road* contribution, "Here Comes the Sun," a resplendent chunk of optimism set to the celebratory ring of Harrison's acoustic guitar capoed up high.

But perhaps the most beloved music on *Abbey Road* is the medley that takes up the second half of side two. If Lennon and McCartney could no longer sit side by side and churn out killer tunes as they did in the early days of the Beatles, this is surely the next best thing—the two of them playfully alternating song fragments, each Beatle in top form and doing what he does best. Lennon the naughty schoolboy comes snickering through the speakers on "Mean Mr. Mustard" and "Polythene Pam." The future Sir Paul is at his most gloriously melodic on "You Never Give Me Your Money" and "Golden Slumbers." Before it's all over, all three guitar-wielding Beatles have traded licks—shades of Hamburg—and the harmony-drenched closing section delivers what many feel to be the Beatles most fitting epitaph: "And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make."

But there was a postscript. The music from the *Get Back* sessions still haunted the Beatles. Glyn Johns had failed to mix the album to their satisfaction, so the group next called in Phil Spector, the fabulously eccentric producer who had forged the early Sixties' legendary Wall of Sound on

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FIELD DAY: Posing for the group's last photo session on August 22, 1969, at John and Yoko's home in Tittenhurst Park, England

girl group hits by the Ronettes, Crystals and others. Spector would go on to coproduce Harrison's 1970 solo debut, *All Things Must Pass*, and several of Lennon's solo discs. His mix of the album was released as *Let It Be* in May 1970. Though Lennon spoke well of the results, McCartney has always made his contempt for the album known; over the years, he has rarely missed an opportunity to deride the layers and layers of orchestral strings that Spector added to Paul's ballad, "The Long and Winding Road." The world got a chance to hear it Paul's way when *Let It Be...Naked*, a "Spectorless" mix of the album, was released in 2003.

While it is by no means a great Beatles album, *Let It Be* did yield two classic tracks, Lennon's dazzlingly imagistic "Across the Universe" and McCartney's inspirational ballad "Let It Be." The latter song's mention of "Mother Mary" is often taken as a religious reference to the Blessed Virgin of Christian tradition, but it is actually an evocation of McCartney's own real-life mother, who was also named Mary. These two songs, among the last the Beatles ever recorded, beautifully underscore the essential difference between Lennon and McCartney as songwriters. McCartney is an inspired poet of domesticity—the cozy comforts of home and family, the lives of ordinary people—whereas Lennon's scope was the entire universe and huge concepts like social justice and ultimate truth. Neither view is "better" than the other, and both are profoundly close to the human heart. But during the fortunate time the Beatles were together, Paul was able to help ground John's work in the tangible, while John was able to help Paul to broaden his perspective—to pull back the camera for a wide angle shot from time to time. The result was a kind of magical balance that neither Beatle's solo work was ever quite able to attain.

May 1970 also saw the debut of the film *Let It Be*, edited from the footage shot in January 1969. Some of it is painful to watch. McCartney comes off as domineering and almost tyrannical at points as he struggles to keep the Beatles alive. His bandmates seem lost at times, but there's a kind of ragged glory in those images and sounds as well: in particular, Lennon and McCartney's rough harmonizing hits hard as they stare one another down and sing "Don't Let Me Down."

That final rooftop performance possesses a disquieting intensity of its own. By the time the film debuted, McCartney had already announced that the Beatles were through, so the irony was not lost when, at the end of the set, Lennon jokingly says, "I'd like to say 'thank you' on behalf of the group and ourselves, and I hope we passed the audition." That's the Beatles' other epitaph—a wisecrack that takes us back to the early days when they were just another struggling rock and roll band, but which also gives us pause to review and reflect on their entire career. How could we not give them thumbs up?

BY THE TIME THE *LET IT BE* FILM PREMIERED IN MAY 1970, *McCARTNEY HAD ANNOUNCED THE BEATLES WERE THROUGH.*

Like every other Beatles record, *Let It Be* was, and is, a perfect reflection of its time. By 1970, the hippie dream, as John Lennon would soon announce, was over. The Rolling Stones' free concert at Altamont had been marred by a murder and beatings of both fans and musicians at the hands of the Hells Angels. The horrors of the Vietnam war could no longer be swept under the rug, nor could the increasingly militant mood of those who opposed it. Revolution was in the air. Whatever the Seventies would bring, rock fans were going to have to get through it without the Beatles.

So that rough-and-ready rooftop ending—Lennon wearing his wife's coat, hastily borrowed to keep off the January chill—was very true to its time. And all time. Rock and roll *is* a messy, dysfunctional business. The greats always seem to break up, die young or go insane. But the perfect, pristine vocal harmonies that end the *Abbey Road* medley are just as true. For all its danger, rock and roll also has an uncanny transcendent, transformative power. The Beatles really did end on a high note—ascending to rock and roll glory on a silvery guitar chord and golden vocal triads. And anytime you want, their music can still take you there. ❖

ZUMA PRESS

HERE COMES THE SUB

The 1999 reissue *of the animated Beatles film* Yellow Submarine *brought George Harrison back into the spotlight. In what would be among his last interviews, he talked about the movie's songs and his always-inspirational view of life and music.*

by TIMOTHY WHITE

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IN JUNE 1999, the late Timothy White, then editor-in-chief of Billboard magazine, *interviewed George Harrison at the guitarist's home in Henley-on-Thames, England. The occasion was the imminent reissue of* Yellow Submarine, *the 1968 animated film inspired by the Beatles' song of the same name from their 1966 album,* Revolver. *At the time, Harrison was in the middle of recording his own new solo album, the tracks of which would be released in 2002 on* Brainwashed, *one year after Harrison's death from brain cancer. In this far-reaching interview, one of the last Harrison gave, the guitarist talks about "Hey Bulldog," "Eleanor Rigby" and other songs on the* Yellow Submarine *soundtrack, as well as his philosophy on life and art.*

"AS YOU CAN SEE, I've been working in the garden, planting new things and watering what's already there," says George Harrison, dressed in soil-dusted blue jeans, white T-shirt and brown moccasins, as he extends a hand in welcome.

Slim, tanned and beaming, the 56-year-old former Beatle stands in the epicenter of the sloping Oxfordshire lawn immortalized on the cover of his famed 1970 solo album, *All Things Must Pass*. Harrison's offhand description of the current stage of his longtime domestic hobby is also an apt rundown of his recent professional involvements.

In addition to his "never-ending" landscaping of his Friar Park estate, located in the chalk downs of the Chiltern Hills on the outskirts of Henley, 35 miles west of London, Harrison has spent the past few months working with surviving bandmates Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr and the staff of their joint Apple enterprise on a boldly revamped edition of the Beatles' 1969 album *Yellow Submarine* for release in September. The unique project is linked to the release of a restored version of the 1968 animated film *Yellow Submarine* and the world premiere of a "lost" video shot in '68 while the Beatles were in Studio 3 of EMI's Abbey Road studios cutting a track for the movie's song score.

Meanwhile, he has been immersed in final recording and archival reconnaissance for an unprecedentedly intimate new solo release recorded on-site in his own facilities, and a proposed multi-CD retrospective featuring his solo demos, outtakes and previously unreleased recordings. Moreover, in the past few years Harrison has regained ownership of his entire 1976–'92 catalog on the Warner Bros. subsidiary Dark Horse (including his multi-Platinum 1987 album, *Cloud Nine*, critically deemed one of the finest artistic outings by an ex-Beatle), plus the two Traveling Wilburys albums he made in 1988 and 1990 with cohorts Bob Dylan, Jeff Lynne, Roy Orbison and Tom Petty. Harrison is contemplating reissuing those largely out-of-print recordings, possibly with bonus tracks.

But consideration of all these matters is temporarily placed on hold this magnificent June afternoon, as George spends several hours taking his guest around

The *Yellow Submarine* premiere at the London Pavilion, July 17, 1968

the house and grounds of the handsome Victorian Gothic house and parkland he purchased in 1969.

"When I first saw this place a year or so earlier, I still couldn't afford it!" says Harrison, alluding to the snarled, sluggish stream of royalties and revenue the Fab Four encountered in the wake of their mammoth success. "It was Derek Taylor [*the late journalist/author and Apple publicist*] who talked me into buying the property after visiting it again with me, back when there were Catholic nuns living here and there was talk of demolishing the run-down building because of the upkeep. Derek and I smoked some pot in the lower garden, and he told me to go ahead and get it. So I've spent the last 30 years fixing up the place, finding local people to help me do the gardening that used to be handled by a staff of over 40 in the 1870s, when it was built by a lawyer-baronet named Sir Frank Crisp." [*Crisp was immortalized by Harrison in the song "Ballad of Sir Frankie Crisp (Let It Roll)," on* All Things Must Pass.]

By electric cart and on foot, Harrison takes me for an extended tour around the acres of topiaries, waterfall-fed lagoons, graceful Oriental arboretums and man-made underground grottos—complete with concrete stalagmites and stalactites originally fashioned by Victorian craftsmen. As he does, he recalls the small backyard gardens his father, Harold, once tended in the Liverpool suburbs of Speke and Woolton. Later, over tea and spice cake on the house veranda, George also recalls his boyhood exploits emulating the crusading knight in Sir Walter Scott's 1819 novel *Ivanhoe* while outfitted in cardboard armor of his own construction. As Harrison speaks, a deer suddenly appears in a clearing 50 yards distant, ambling with head high as if to tempt the spectral longbows of medieval archers still haunting these woods seven centuries later.

GEORGE IS STRIKINGLY FIT and re-energized in the wake of his mild brush with throat cancer several years ago, the only evidence of the small lump removed from his neck in August 1997 being a barely perceptible, hair-thin scar. "Luckily for me," he says, "they found that this nodule was more of a warning than anything else." George was treated with radiation that year at the Royal Marsden Hospital, England's top cancer center, and in January '98 he received an "all-clear" bill of health from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Back in '97, Harrison quit a briefly revived smoking habit for good, and ever since then his proximity to noxious fumes has been confined to the pit-stop exhaust of Ferraris and Renaults on the World Grand Prix racing circuit he still frequents. He also travels often to Hawaii, India, Australia and the U.S. But when he's in England, he's a homebody.

Despite its vast size, the Friar Park house has a cleverly designed human scale, its entry hall, rich carvings and winding central staircase all built to appear grand, but without the outsized dimensions of conventional Gothic design. Harrison's playful personality is ideally suited to the premises, and vice-versa: the halls are dotted with waggish design touches, like little bronze monk's heads whose noses are call buttons or light switches. Lovely tile panels depicting scenes from fairy tales are inset in the walls, and little carved leprechauns and grinning gremlins peek out from hiding places. Asked about the stone dwarfs that once reclined on the meadow-sized lawn for the *All Things Must Pass* photo session, he smiles and says, "They've been repainted and we put them elsewhere on the grounds to give people something to discover as they walk about."

In another portion of the estate, below the house that George is replanting, he's installing a hidden sound system and a trellised patio/dance floor for outdoor parties. Handsomely arbor-like, but embedded with elegant pockets of whimsy, Friar Park is intended for amusement as well as reflection. And access to music is always at hand. Under the stairs in the living room is a glowing, antique Wurlitzer jukebox filled with jazz from the Twenties and Thirties, rare pop from the Fifties and Sixties and even Mexican balladry of the Forties that Harrison's wife adores. On a counter just inside a terrace is a softbound copy of *A Selection of Eric Clapton's Guitars*, the official catalog of the guitarist's impending auction to aid his Crossroads drug rehabilitation center, in Antigua. George says he and his family will be going down to London for a pre-auction reception in support of Clapton's cause ("Eric's so great, and he's in a happy, more easy frame of mind these days"), and then he muses whether the time will ever come that he might consider parting with pieces from his own extensive stringed-instrument collection.

That trove, arrayed on the second floor of the house, includes everything from quaint mandolins and bajoleles to an original Coral electric sitar, several neat rows of National steels of assorted vintages and lustrous custom acoustics Harrison plays daily. Also on hand are numerous keyboards and Western and Eastern percussion, as well as modern drum kits on which friends Jim Keltner and Jim Capaldi have recently been pounding. Another recent visitor to Friar Park was veteran British rocker Joe Brown (famed for the early Sixties U.K. hits "A Picture of You" and "It Only Took a Minute"), who brought along former Elvis guitarist Scotty Moore for a chat.

JUST BEFORE SUNSET, we trek a quarter-mile along the fringes of the estate to a rough-hewn replica of a Russian dacha, the tiny cottage tucked among pines on a rise overlooking the Thames Valley. Harrison unlocks the porched bungalow, a bed-sit–sized retreat that has a small stove heater and an ornate chest concealing a stereo. He puts on a CD from Dylan's 1985 *Biograph* compilation and plays one of his favorite songs, "Every Grain of Sand." We banter on the porch steps while in the background Dylan intones, "The sun beat down upon the stairs/Of time to light the way." As we watch the tangerine orb sink behind the turrets of his mansion, Harrison confesses his ambivalence about re-entering the pop arena with his latest compositions and legacy of basement tapes, which include his own moving rendition of "Every Grain of Sand."

"It's hard to think of leaving the privacy and quiet of the happy life I have here," he admits, saying he wants to be in touch musically with the world but can't imagine returning to even the sporadic touring and self-promotion

HARRY MYERS / REX USA

of his Seventies-to-Nineties solo span. Yet the increasingly negative tilt of society, with its obsessive preoccupations with violence, bigotry and nihilism, troubles Harrison. A fallen Catholic whose adult embrace of Indian spirituality has never wavered, Harrison feels the need to try "to cut through the cynicism" to let the public know he still believes in the power of music "to inspire, give comfort or another outlook" on "all the terrible things" that "we're doing to ourselves and each other these days."

Later, after a lasagna dinner in his ornately paneled kitchen with his wife Olivia, their son Dhani (just home from his school year at Brown University in the States) and Olivia's sister, Linda, Harrison take his visitor upstairs to his Friar Park Studio. Selecting a National Dobro from the vast array of vintage guitars hanging from the walls, Harrison slips a glass bottleneck on his finger as he seats himself to strum "The Farmer Is the Man Who Feeds Us All," the traditional tune of 1860s America made famous in the Twenties by country music pioneer Fiddlin' John Carson and later popularized on Ry Cooder's 1971 *Into the Purple Valley* album as "Taxes on the Farmer Feeds Us All."

"That's where I first heard the tune," says Harrison of Cooder's interpretation, before he begins to sing: "The farmer is the man, the farmer is the man/Buys on credit until the fall/Then they take him by the hand/And they lead him from his land/And the merchant he's the man who gets it all." Whether or not the song choice is intentional, Harrison knows what it's like to be short-changed or bilked, having struggled through decades of assorted business betrayals, baseless lawsuits and high-handed practices designed to separate him from ownership of, or recompense for, his compositions and recorded performances.

AS HARRISON CONTINUES putting the last loving touches on his next solo exploit and pores over his astounding, career-length trove of previously unheard private sessions and alternative passes of his own hits and standards, questions clearly linger for him about the preferred commercial and logistical paths to take in a technologically expanding marketplace. He mentions the internet as an alluring outlet.

"My attitude is a bit like, I'll always write songs and record them and want other people to enjoy them," he says, smiling serenely. "As for the rest, we'll see."

Stepping into the control room, Harrison cues up tracks slated for his solo project. Olivia, Linda and Dhani slip in to listen. Among the numerous new songs he unveils are "Valentine," a potent power ballad that sounds like one of his cleverest, hit-destined excursions, with the song's hapless protagonist tossing out every ardent couplet he can conjure up to capture an unattainable lover's heart. In sharp contrast are "Pisces Fish," a partially autobiographical rock hymn about learning to both swim in the river and watch it flow, and "Brainwashed," a blistering anthem about social delusions in a world running down. The lyric, by turns scathing and witty, abruptly shifts into a brief, ethereal spoken-word bridge before roaring back for a tumultuous finale.

Coming next in the series of DAT cassettes are surprisingly different incarnations of classics from the Harrison canon, interspersed with unusual cover versions, dexterous acoustic woodsheddings with famous colleagues and deft melodic larks that consistently show George's instinctive gifts as vocalist, multi-instrumentalist and lyricist. What's most striking about all the music is the sense of exuberance, the delight in the fine points and the expansive rightness of each impromptu flight. Traversing the full emotional spectrum, this is skilled, unselfconscious inspiration, plainly pursued in private for its own rhapsodic sake.

Among the songs under consideration for the new album is a track that deals both caustically and hilariously with Harrison's mid-Nineties legal triumph in Los Angeles Superior court over ex-business partner Denis O'Brien, who George sued in 1993 for outrageous fiscal mismanagement. Another song makes light of the intrigues surrounding the politics of Grand Prix racing. As in so much of Harrison's songwriting, allegory and social commentary are threaded through rock that draws from a wealth of stylistic textures (blues, folk, country, ragas and other world musics and even contemporary electronica) to make its well-tailored points.

"A lot depends on what the sponsors of the radio programmers want to hear," George says with a mischievous wink. "But I've gone too far down the road of what I'm about to adjust things to suit the bad taste of the moment. I mean, I've got music on my jukebox that's 70 years old, and it sounds so fun and happy, with great arrangements—cute old songs, like 'Barnacle Bill the Sailor,' that have great-sounding instruments and incredible performances. And all of it was just blown live down one of those ancient recording horns.

"Popular music improved so incredibly over the last 60 years, from the Thirties onward, and that includes the War years—although there were a few bad things in the Forties. But you'd think that by now, in the Nineties, people would be open to the full range of the music that's been made!

"But people in TV or radio still hold onto the old sense of control. There's a disease of conceit out there, even though there are a few people hanging onto the old values. But to venture out and compete with such open prejudices is really something. To get [*those old values*] across, you have to go out there."

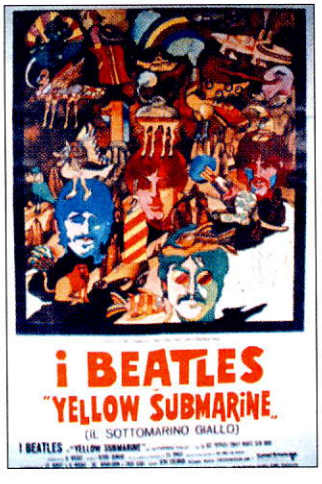
IT IS LONG AFTER 1 A.M. when Harrison winds up his kaleidoscopic torrent of timeless tapes with his own lustrous, harmony-steeped version of "Run So Far," the poignant song he gave to Eric Clapton for his old chum's 1989 *Journeyman* album. George muses that it might fit well with the more current efforts he's culled for the new record, and it's true. It shares their same startling openness and intimacy, heralding what could well be the most stunningly personal omnibus he's ever offered his fans. What, Harrison is asked, will he call this wholly novel album when it's finally done?

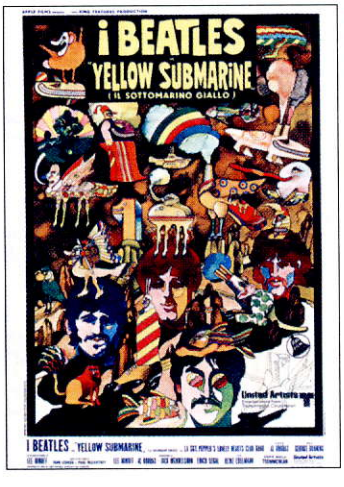
George indicates a lined notepad laid on a corner of the mixing console, on which has been sketched a simple outline of a human foot from the ankle downward. Penned above it is the title *Portrait of a Leg End*.

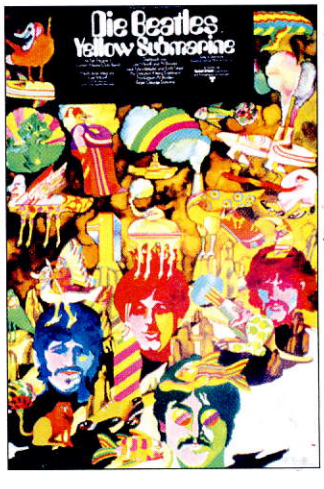
His eyes twinkle as his guest gets the gag, and then he adds, "Maybe I could draw a boot on the foot for my boxed set of old demos, outtakes and unreleased stuff, and I'll call that *Portrait of a Boot Leg*."

The next morning, following a round of Apple-related phone calls, Harrison reflected on the immediate business at hand: the allegorical *Yellow Submarine* film fantasy he was always delighted by and the companion album he always felt was somewhat lacking—until now. Giggling as he recalls how John Lennon would impersonate the voices of the mythical

Yellow Submarine posters from around the world







POSTERS COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

Posing in peaceful surroundings at Friar Park, in 1975

submarine crew during studio run-throughs for the title track, George softly says, "It was like a little party. Now, it can be a bigger party."

GUITAR LEGENDS Let's start by clearing up current misconceptions of what the upcoming *Yellow Submarine: A Songtrack* release is about and what it will actually encompass.

GEORGE HARRISON The main thing you need to get over to all the people is that it's not a soundtrack but actually the "songtrack." This will be a total of all the Beatles songs that were used in the film.

The whole *Submarine* thing was written or done around the time of *Sgt. Pepper's*. [*But*] *Yellow Submarine* ended up with just those six new songs that were in the film. And then they put all that George Martin-orchestrated material on there. But now it will be every song that was in the movie—because the film also had "All You Need Is Love" and "Sgt. Pepper's" too—all together, for the first time. And they've all been remixed!

GL The film also had even older songs, like "Eleanor Rigby," that are on *Yellow Submarine: A Songtrack*.

HARRISON Exactly, and they're in all their new mixes. So the video and the DVD versions and the new CDs will also have the same new stereo mixes that will match the wraparound sound.

But I haven't even seen the finished film yet! We're going to a private screening of the new version in a week or two. We may have a couple of cinema "events," showing it in theaters, and I think that's gonna turn into a big night out. But the film is not going to be out in a general theatrical release.

GL There's supposedly a *Yellow Submarine* EP in the vaults that EMI had thought of putting out about a year after the *Yellow Submarine* album was finally released in January 1969. The EP had the six songs put on the soundtrack album, plus an early version of "Across the Universe." Of course, it never came out.

HARRISON I remember that the early version of "Across the Universe" was the best one. But we finally put that one out on a World Wildlife Fund charity album [No One's Gonna Change Our World, *December 1969, Regal Starline*]. And it also later went on the *Anthology* [*2*] album. But, you know, somebody might have said, like, "Oh, at this point in time we had some songs in the can," but there's nothing that I can remember that was ever a solid discussion about an EP of any sort like that, other than the [*two-disc*] *Magical Mystery Tour* EP [*issued in the U.K. in December 1967*]; in America they didn't have extended plays so that had to be made into an album.

GL What about "Hey Bulldog," which was cut at the same February 1968 sessions that included the early "Across the Universe," your "The Inner Light," "Lady Madonna" and other material? Do you remember how the group came up with John's piano riff and your guitar riff for "Bulldog"?

HARRISON Well, it was John's song, and it was a great tune. Funny thing is, in the American version of the *Yellow Submarine* film [*as well as in most U.K. prints*] they edited "Hey Bulldog" out, so we had to make sure this time that it would be in, because of that whole bit in the movie of the dog with all the heads.

And we do now have an unreleased video of "Hey Bulldog." We were in the studio recording [*10 takes of*] "Hey Bulldog," and apparently it was at a time when they needed some footage for some other record ["*Lady Madonna*"], and a film crew came along and filmed us. Then they cut up the footage and used some of the shots for something else [*the "Lady Madonna" video*]. But it was [*the late Apple chief executive*] Neil Aspinall who found out that when you watched [*the "Lady Madonna" footage*], we were recording "Hey Bulldog"! This was apparently the only time we were actually filmed recording something. So Neil put [*the footage*] back together again and put the "Hey Bulldog" soundtrack onto it. And there it was!

GL An unreleased live Beatles video!

HARRISON [*laughs*] Yeah! And everything has a different mix on it now! You see, another thing is that a lot of the time the Beatles were only working on four-track tape, so we'd get to the fourth track and mix the four tracks onto one track of another four-track machine, and then we'd do another three tracks.

So what they've done in these new mixes—which we did a little bit of on the *Anthology* records—was connect all the [*original*] tracks together and have the first four tracks separated and then the three overdubbed tracks separated, in order to create a new mix. Normally the mixes on Beatles records from the Sixties up until now have all been on these finished four-tracks, with the pre-mix of the other three tracks stuck onto them. In other

TERRY O'NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

Harrison at the film's press screening in 1968, next to a lifesize doll of a villainous *Yellow Submarine* Blue Meanie

words, the individual tracks on the basic tapes were rediscovered, allowing us to separate each of the original, incremental tracks.

So for the first time you've actually got a much bigger, cleaner mix, because you've got the original bass and drum and guitar tracks unmixed-together. And also, with all the old equipment and all the compressors and the stuff that we used in those days, you'd spend ages trying to improve the final four-track mix you figured you were stuck with. This engineer, a fellow named Peter Mew, did a lot of the work with a guy called Allan Rouse, who today is kind of in charge of all the Beatles catalog. So we went in and listened to all these new, fully remixed tracks, and they really are good, with the sound coming all around you.

GL A few more questions about the classic songs originally on the *Yellow Submarine* album, like "It's All Too Much." Is that you playing the organ on that track?

HARRISON That's right. I probably wrote it on the organ.

GL At the end of "Too Much" there are snippets of Jeremiah Clarke's "Prince of Denmark's March" and the Merseys' '66 [*No. 4 U.K.*] hit "Sorrow."

HARRISON You mean on the fade-out? Yeah, "With your long blond hair/And your eyes of blue." That was all just this big ending we had, going out. And as it was in those days, we had the horn players just play a bit of trumpet voluntarily, and so that's how that "Prince of Denmark" bit was played.

And we just came up with and sang that lyric of "your eyes of blue." But just a couple of years ago somebody suddenly tried to sue us for that!

GL For singing a little snatch of lyric to give exposure to a song?

HARRISON Oh yeah. I just ignored it. I think that's one of my songs that's actually published now by ATV and Michael Jackson's Northern Songs, so I just thought, "Well, they can deal with it." I just thought it's so ridiculous, you know.

Incidentally, that riff that's played on "It's All Too Much," I seem to have heard at least 50 songs that've used that lick since then. I mean, that's become like a stock thing. The difference is some people admit where their influences come from, like the Byrds [*did*] with the Rickenbacker 12-string thing after they all went to see *A Hard Day's Night*.

But then I've had people writing to me and telling me about a group called Texas with a song called "Black Eyed Boy" [*a No. 5 U.K. hit in 1997*], and everybody's saying, "Hey, they've ripped off your song!" But I don't know, because somebody sent me a cassette and I put it on, and I couldn't hear a thing!

We've never really been into suing people for things like that. I've heard a bunch of records in the past that took things from songs like "What Is Life," or "Living in the Material World," or "Here Comes the Sun." What's the point? But I suppose the point would be like Bright Tunes [*the publishing company that started the protracted plagiarism suit against Harrison for "My Sweet Lord"*]—you could just try and make some money out of people.

The guitar feedback on the intro to "It's All Too Much" was done in May of '67, so it was pre-Hendrix, before he started to go wild with that stuff, since his *Are You Experienced?* album [*released in the U.K. on December 5, 1967*] hadn't come out yet.

But now I don't think I was playing the guitar feedback; as I say, I was playing the organ, so I think it was probably Paul who did that. But it was, like, manufactured, meaning that it wasn't like an accident or anything; it was part of the arrangement.

I just wanted to write a rock and roll song about the whole psychedelic thing of the time: "Sail me on a silver sun/Where I know that I am free/Show me that I'm everywhere/And get me home for tea." [*laughs*] Because you'd trip out, you see, on all this stuff, and then whoops!—you'd just be back having your evening cup of tea!

But we also had that feedback on "I Feel Fine" [*in 1964*]. John always claimed it came about from playing an acoustic Gibson with a pickup in it. It had a big round sound hole, and it just used to feed back very easily if you faced it toward the amplifier.

But then I've heard other people say that wasn't the first feedback either: "In 1897, we had feedback on such and such!" [*laughs*]

GL "Only a Northern Song" was intended as a little commentary of yours.

HARRISON It was at the point that I realized [*Beatles music publisher*] Dick James had conned me out of the copyrights for my own songs by offering to become my publisher. As an 18- or 19-year-old kid, I thought, Great, somebody's gonna publish my songs! But he never said, "And incidentally, when you sign this document here, you're assigning me the ownership of the songs [*Harrison had written as a Beatle*]," which is what it is. It was just a blatant theft. By the time I realized what had happened, when they were going public and making all this money out of this catalog, I wrote "Only a Northern Song" as what we call a "piss-take," just to have a joke about it.

GL "All Together Now," by Paul and John—do you have any thoughts about that?

HARRISON It was a nursery rhyme kind of thing. Again, if you look at it from one point of view, it's embarrassing. But we seem to have been the all-around entertainers, weren't we? Somehow we got away with stuff like that, either with Ringo singing "Yellow Submarine" or us doing a song like "All Together Now."

GL Speaking of things suited for children from the Beatles, Al Brodax, who produced the *Yellow Submarine* movie, also had done the series of Beatles cartoons that were shown on Saturday and Sunday mornings in America. [*Several dozen episodes were broadcast on ABC-TV starting in 1965 but only given limited later exposure in England on Granada Television.*] Whatever happened to those cartoons?

HARRISON Oh, we bought them all a few years ago, just so we'd have control over them for the future. I always kind of liked them—they were so bad or silly they were good, if you know what I mean. And I think the passage of time might make them more fun now, in terms of being more watchable than they really were back then. But we don't have any plans for them at the moment.

GL By the way, the song "Yellow Submarine" never really did have anything to do with a narcotic pill by that nickname, did it?

HARRISON I never heard of that pill. Paul came up with the concept of "Yellow Submarine." All I know is just that every time we'd all get around the piano with guitars and start listening to it and arranging it into a record, we'd all fool about. As I said, John does the voice that sounds like someone talking down a tube or ship's funnel, as they do in the merchant marine. [*laughs*] And on the final track there's actually that very small party happening! As I seem to remember, there's a few screams and what sounds like small crowd noises in the background.

GL Fans still wonder if that voice shouting into the submarine's funnel is John, same as they still ask who coughed at the start of "Taxman" on the *Revolver* album.

HARRISON My son Dhani reckons it was me. He says, "I'd recognize that cough anywhere!" [*laughs*] But I don't remember.

GL Your own *Sgt. Pepper's*-ish film characters in the *Yellow Submarine* movie were dubbed by actors. The Beatles' only actual appearance in the film is at the end of the picture.

RB/REDFERNS/GETTY

HARRISON Well, we hadn't really been that involved in the making of what was supposed to be our third movie. I must say, at that point I had no idea of how [*our appearance*] was going to fit into the film or where it was going. We had our lines and just kind of did it, but it all turned out quite well with the animation, didn't it?

GL It was excellent, and the film was very influential, particularly the work of principal animation designer Heinz Edelmann.

HARRISON Right, and then Peter Max built his whole career on the fact that everybody thought he'd done it! I loved a lot of those characters [*Edelmann*] came up with. And the Blue Meanie named Max, I always wondered if the later idea of the Mad Max movie character came from him.

GL It's a spectacular, Dante's *Inferno*-type tale of good versus evil. And that flying glove character is scary!

HARRISON [*laughs*] It is, it is! And all those Apple Bonkers! The fact is, with the way the culture and the government are now, it's all still happening now as it was in *Yellow Submarine*. Except the Blue Meanies have got a bigger stranglehold on the planet right now than they even had back in '68! And it looks like there's no musical group coming along to break the bubble of grayness, because even the music industry has turned gray and is dominated by Blue Meanies.

GL Do you think popular music has had an impact on shaping minds, and that across history it's helped influence people's thinking?

HARRISON I think definitely; there's no question it has, and I know that from the feedback I'm still getting. The other day I got a letter from a guy in London who's a homeopathic doctor, who'd gotten it from an 84-year-old patient of his, so he passed her letter on to me. And she just went on saying, " 'My Sweet Lord' changed my life, and even to this day has such a great influence on me." I just know from people I've met, fans I meet and people who come to me in tears from places like Argentina that the Beatles' music had a great influence. And still has.

> "I JUST KNOW FROM PEOPLE I'VE MET, FANS I MEET AND PEOPLE WHO COME TO ME IN TEARS THAT ***THE BEATLES' MUSIC HAD A GREAT INFLUENCE.*** AND STILL HAS."

That's the great thing about music. So I can be influenced now, and I can listen to and enjoy a Hoagy Carmichael record from 1929 on my jukebox, with all those great musicians on it, and it's timeless inasmuch as it's captured on that disc.

Music definitely influences you, whether it just makes you feel happy or sad. And likewise, I'm sure all that horrible music these days is making people change—there's just worse crime, more cynicism. I wouldn't necessarily directly blame the music for all of that, but there is this kind of chemistry that's created through endless television or music programming or advertising that drones away on these things—with crap music, with murder movies and that whole thing with Robert De Niro pointing a big gun at everyone on the big posters [*for the film* Ronin] that you see everywhere now in London. And so it's like my son Dhani was saying, that "Who gives a shit about bombing Bosnia!" becomes the attitude on a campus, because they're all so desensitized.

GL It's like the music and entertainment business has gotten into the arms business.

HARRISON Yeah! And it was both pathetic and very funny at the time. But a couple of years ago I was in Los Angeles and I had the television on, and for the local weather we went to some guy at the beach. And in the shot of him "live," with the beach in the background, you could just see the pollution was just dreadful. And he just goes, "Yes, well, it's another beautiful day down here at Santa Monica!" And I thought, What are you talking about? It stinks!

But that's how it is—that's the desensitizing. Maybe in another few hundred years people will be living in sewers with rats crawling all over them, and they'll be thinking, "This is great, life is good." Mahatma Gandhi said, "Create and preserve the image of your choice," and the image we seem to have chosen is one of greed and butchery.

GL Many observers feel that basic issues of control are shifting in the entertainment industries. If the major companies don't get into the business of helping artists by offering unique new goods and services on mutually favorable terms, the artists could just get in the habit of doing it on their own.

HARRISON While everybody is getting all excited about the fact that it's gonna be the millennium, the sad thing is not just the way music's being made these days but also the way music's being played—or rather not being played—on the radio and elsewhere. You've got such a wealth of great music out there, old and new, but the marketplace doesn't indicate that. Meanwhile, someone like Hoagy Carmichael, who would have been a hundred years old right at the millennium, he represented a certain quality of songwriting and musicianship and integrity that lasted a hundred years!

What I'm trying to say is that everybody's getting so excited about something that doesn't really exist—this whole idea of time turning and 2,000 years. I see time as an infinite thing, and I see Creation as an infinite thing, but Monday, Tuesday or the millennium just typify how mankind has to subdivide it up into things for personal future gain.

GL You've spent the last few years focusing on your family life while recording music at home just for the joy of it.

HARRISON I've spent too long in the garden. [*laughs*] So the concept of going on a TV show with Jerry Stringer or whatever his name is, to try to talk about something while everybody's punching each other—that to me is pathetic. To try and sell something like that, you sell your soul!

That's why I just feel I can't go back into the side of the industry that's become this way. And that's why I'm just going along with that girl from Abba [*Agnetha Faltskog*] who chat-show people criticize for being off on an island these days and out of touch with the music business. One fellow on television actually said, "She had a beautiful ass but now she is an ass!" It was so nasty—can you believe it? But she's probably much more spiritual, much more content and just a better person to her family and friends.

Did you ever see that [*1989*] movie made for [*Harrison's own*] HandMade Films called *How to Get Ahead in Advertising*? It was written and directed by Bruce Robinson, who hated the Thatcherism going on at the time he made the picture. It's about this bloke in this advertising agency who's under heavy stress to have this campaign for pimple lotion done by Monday. He ends up getting a big boil on his neck, and the boil gets bigger and bigger, and it manifests into this face. One day he looks in the mirror and says, "The bastard looks just like me!" He's getting sick of the lies and the bullshit of this industry, and he says, "They won't be happy until every fucking one of us is crouching in some hatchback on a motorway," and he's trying to withdraw from it. But the boil, this "head," is his bad side, and it's taking over. He goes into the hospital, and they lance the real head, and it's the boil side that comes back to work! It's a very bizarre black comedy about the conflict between the greed and the moral stance against it.

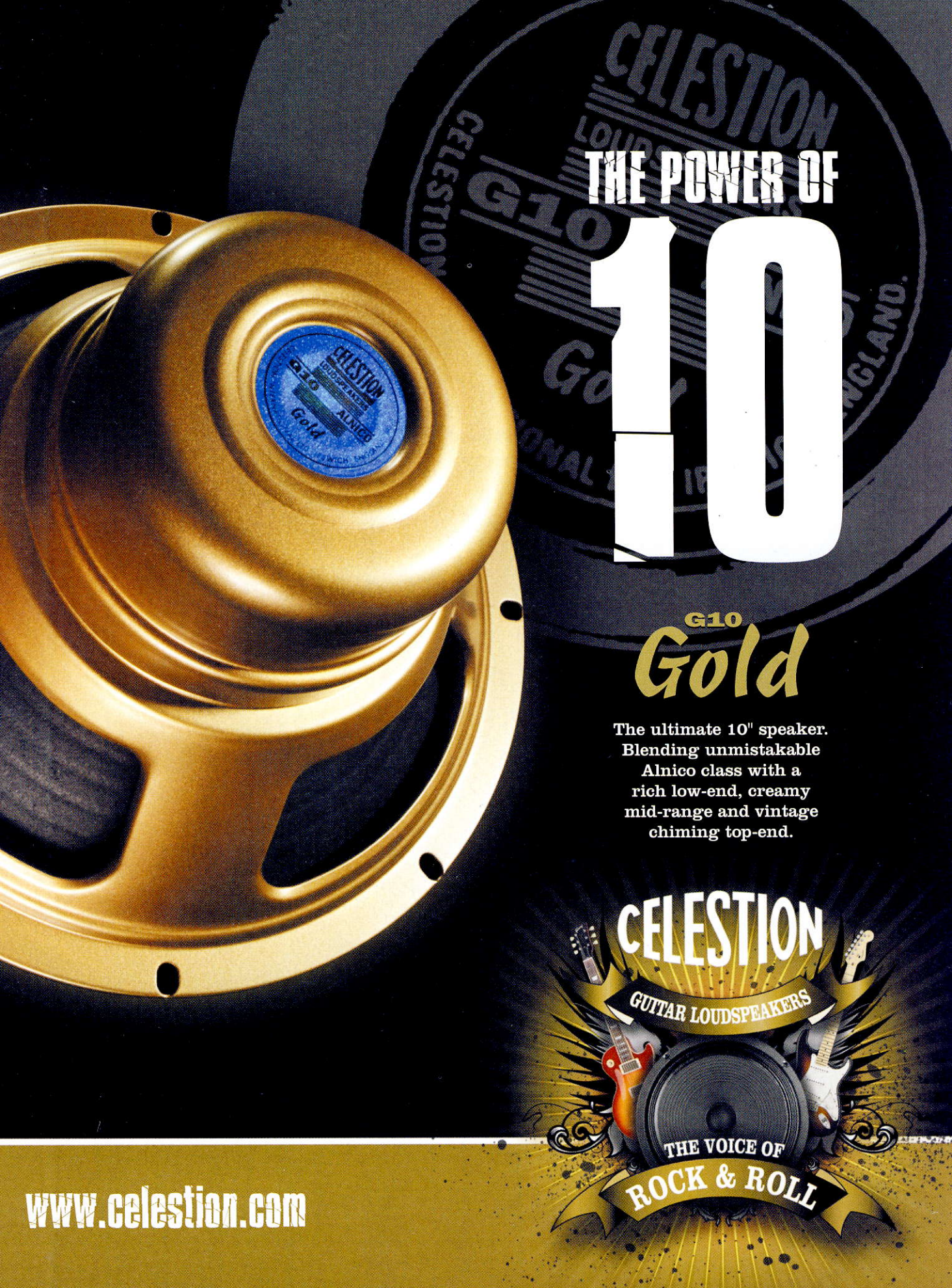
GL There's no ceiling to the top if you've got the courage to climb that high. But if you're diving for the bottom in life, you discover there's no bottom to the bottom.

HARRISON Oh, yeah, there is no end, and no beginning. But what it's all really about is the now. And right now, music is being dictated by all the people who have nothing to do with music, like sponsors, or executives who are just trying to climb social ladders rather than actually enjoy what it is they do. So the music is getting worse because somehow we just created these monsters in the music industry.

I mean, you tell me one person other than Bob Dylan who has a moral message in a tune that's improved upon Bob's words in his song "Every Grain of Sand." [*He recites some of the lyrics*] "Don't have the inclination to look back on any mistakes/Like Cain I now behold this chain of events that I must break/In the fury of the moment I can see the Master's hand/In every leaf that trembles/In every grain of sand./Oh the flowers of indulgence and the weeds of yesteryear/Like criminals they have choked the breath of conscience and good cheer/...I gaze into the doorway of temptation's angry fame/And every time I pass that way/I always hear my name/Then onward in my journey/I come to understand/That every hair is numbered/Like every grain of sand."

GL So what does George Harrison do as a songwriter and a person to talk back to this awful era that Dylan once recognized would arrive?

HARRISON Well, I say that everybody knows they're all being brainwashed, by everything. So in my music I just sing a rock and roll song about the power of love, on "Valentine," or about the eternal river that keeps flowing through this area near my home, on "Pisces Fish." Or I sing [*quoting from his new song "Brainwashed"*], "God, God, God, won't you lead us through this mess?" ❖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The Beatles in Abbey Road's Studio 3 during the *Revolver* sessions

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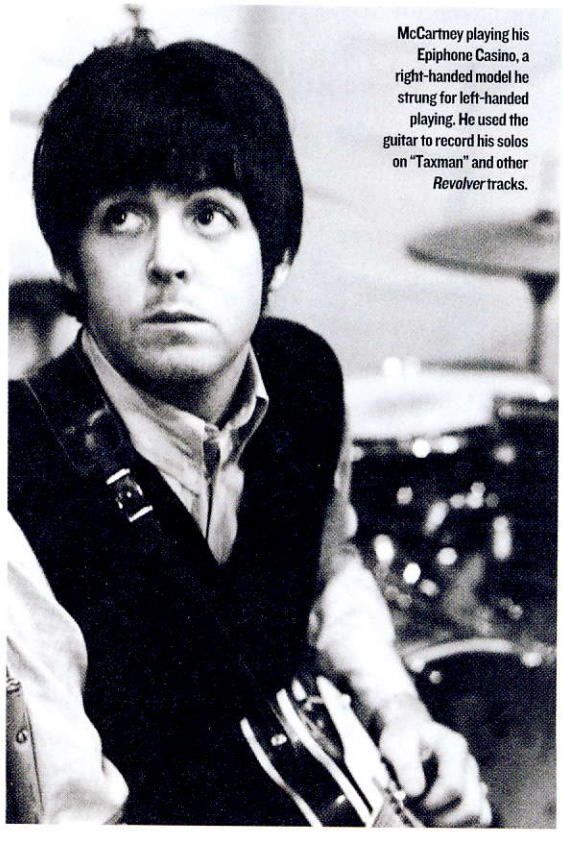
ROUND TRIP

In 1966, the Beatles tuned in, turned on and dropped down the world's first psychedelic album: Revolver. *Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick tells the story behind rock and roll's perennial favorite record.*

by CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

IN THE HISTORY OF ROCK AND ROLL, 1966 is the year the music got "experienced." It was, by all historical accounts, an international event. That January, thousands of teenagers were introduced to the pleasures of the recently banned drug LSD at the three-day San Francisco Trips Festival, where the newly christened Grateful Dead gave them their first taste of "acid rock," as well. In London, elite avant-garde music events were gradually becoming the staging points for drug experimentation, giving way to full-blown multimedia "happenings"—or, as they were more appropriately called, "freak outs." Drugs, particularly pot and speed, had always been part of rock and roll's clandestine lifestyle, but now they crept out into the center of the music's very experience. Across the Western world, polite Cold War–era society was giving way to the self-indulgent hedonism of 1967's Summer of Love. In this regard, 1966 was a pivotal year.

Nowhere was this shift more evident than on *Revolver*. Released in August 1966, *Revolver* is the album on which the Beatles gave free reign to the fertile manifestations of their own drug use, writing songs and creating recordings that spoke to their, and the culture's, emerging consciousness. In songs like "I'm Only Sleeping," "Yellow Submarine" and the hallucinogenic mantra "Tomorrow Never Knows," surreal lyrics reflected LSD's escapist and mind-expanding qualities in potent and alluring imagery. The group's new production techniques—which included backward guitar, and vocals sung through a rotary Leslie speaker—mimicked acid's sensory distortions, while the use of close miking helped to eliminate the wall between the artist and the listener. As an artistic statement made by four of rock and roll's most successful and influential performers, *Revolver* was vital in disseminating the counterculture's message from the fringe to the mainstream. Significantly, it was the first album the Beatles made for listening, rather than for the dance floor or concert venue: the group had already chosen to quit performing live after 1966, a decision that was sealed during the summer of that year, when the Beatles were threatened while on tour in Tokyo, Manila and the U.S. Besides, many of *Revolver*'s songs would have been impossible to reproduce onstage given the technology of the times.



McCartney playing his Epiphone Casino, a right-handed model he strung for left-handed playing. He used the guitar to record his solos on "Taxman" and other *Revolver* tracks.

In almost every respect, *Revolver* represented a departure from the band's teenybopper past and, simultaneously, a signpost to the Beatles' psychedelic future. Its gritty guitars, thunderous drums and resonant bass guitar tone, not to mention its visually evocative production and studio trickery, were but a test run for the album that followed: their 1967 milestone, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. In that respect, *Revolver* is itself a pivotal album in the Beatles' catalog.

"With *Revolver*, the Beatles made a huge leap forward, not only in their songwriting but in terms of their sound, of course," says Geoff Emerick, the man who engineered *Revolver* and nearly every Beatles record that followed it. (His recollections of the Beatles are chronicled in his book, *Here, There and Everywhere: My Life Recording the Beatles*, written with producer/writer Howard Massey.) "It didn't just change how the Beatles sounded and made their records; it changed how rock and roll sounded and how everyone made records from that point forward."

From the droll and druggy countdown that kicks off its opening track, "Taxman," to the droning mass of tape loops layered over its grand finale, "Tomorrow Never Knows," *Revolver* was a bracing reconsideration of pop music's defining traitvs. John Lennon's "I'm Only Sleeping" might have been a folkie ballad in the vein of his previous Bob Dylan–inspired acoustic songs were it not shot through with his laconic vocal (recorded at slower speed to sound surreal on playback) and bursts of George Harrison's lead guitar recorded backward. "She Said, She Said" is similarly disconcerting, with its shifting meter, drug-inspired lyrics and the relentless snare drum rolls Ringo Starr fires off at unexpected moments.

Orchestrated strings had played an increasingly significant role in rock and roll since Paul McCartney's 1965 ballad "Yesterday," but they had never sounded as urgent or chillingly poignant as they did on his elegiac dirge "Eleanor Rigby," *Revolver*'s stunning second track. Likewise, Harrison had introduced the sitar to the group's music on the 1965 *Rubber Soul* track "Norwegian Wood." On *Revolver*, though, he made a dramatic advance with his composition "Love You To," recorded with a group of outside musicians performing on traditional Indian instruments, including sitar and tabla.

Even in its more traditional moments, *Revolver* surprises with fresh sounds. McCartney's Motown-inspired "Got to Get You into My Life" puts bright horn and sax flourishes where, in a previous time, Harrison might have laid down guitar figures. And when McCartney pauses for the solo break in his ballad "For No One," the space is filled with a mournful and baroque French horn obbligato.

As usual, the Beatles were aided in their production goals for the album by George Martin, the classically trained producer who had signed them to Parlophone, the EMI Records subsidiary in his charge, and subsequently produced their records. Through much of the Beatles' early recordings, it was Martin who helped bring their songs and recordings to perfection by suggesting arrangements and vocal harmonies and working out the technical means of achieving the group's growing production ambitions.

Yet, *Revolver* is not Martin's but Emerick's album. His signature runs its length, from the vibrant tones of the instruments to its inventive sonic design. In recording it, Emerick responded to the Beatles' increasingly complex demands with a cunning ingenuity, exploiting everything from Leslie speakers to valve compressors to backward tape effects to achieve both the group's sounds and those that had been nagging in his own head. Close miking was among his chief contributions to *Revolver* and, subsequently, studio production at large. Prior to the album, engineers were instructed never to place microphones within 18 to 24 inches of drum kits and other loud instruments that might damage their sensitive pickup mechanisms. On his very first session as the Beatles' engineer, Emerick disobeyed EMI's strict rules on the matter and, in so doing, helped to create the walloping tones that would become Ringo Starr's signature drum sound. After *Revolver*, close miking of drum kits became the accepted, if not the required, practice for rock and roll productions.

Remarkably, Emerick was all of 20 years old at the time he made his debut as a recording engineer. Hired at Abbey Road just three months shy

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of his 16th birthday, he had been at the company for just two days when, on September 4, 1962, as part of his two-week orientation, he attended an evening session for a young unknown pop group from Liverpool in the facility's Studio Two. It was, of course, the Beatles, then making their first proper recording session for EMI.

Over the next several years, he participated in numerous Beatles sessions as tape operator for Martin and Norman Smith, who engineered the group's records up to the end of 1965. Although most of the band ignored him, the shy young "button pusher" felt an instinctive bond with McCartney, who took time to chat with him and invite his opinions. When Smith quit to become a record producer at the start of 1966, Emerick was asked to become the Beatles' engineer over some of his more qualified colleagues. "I suspect Paul had something to do with that," says Emerick. "We got along well, and I was young, so he knew I would be open to the kind of experimentation they wanted to do."

The timing couldn't have been better: the sessions for *Revolver* would begin soon and the Beatles were determined to make it distinctly different from its predecessors. In that respect, Emerick was made to order. "I've always thought of sound as images rather than in strict technical terms," he explains. "A lot of the sounds I heard in my head were dark, with more depth. And with *Revolver*, it was more about making things sound different, rather than real."

ON APRIL 6, 1966, the Beatles gathered in Abbey Road's Studio Three for the first session of their new album. It was to be unlike any previous, for the track to be tackled was Lennon's "Tomorrow Never Knows," a song born of his experience with LSD, which he'd taken for the first time the previous January. In preparation for his trip, Lennon had read *The Psychedelic Experience*, an LSD manual based on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Its writers, former Harvard professors Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (later to become the transcendental guru Baba Ram Dass), had become famous for their controversial research into the drug's behavioral benefits, which helped to foster its nonpharmaceutical use. Lennon was especially intrigued by their suggestion to "turn off your mind, relax and float downstream" and their description of "surrendering to the void." When he began composing a song about his acid trip, he lifted the lines almost verbatim, singing them like a mantra over a single chord.

eoff Emerick working at a control console in Abbey Road Studios in 1967, with Beatles manager Brian Epstein (left) and producer George Martin

"Oh, it was a shocker, hearing that for the first time," says Emerick, laughing. "I was like jelly when I went in on that session."

Lennon had not titled the song yet, so Emerick took the lead and logged it on the tape box as "Mark I." Performing it for George Martin on the first day of the *Revolver* sessions, Lennon told the producer, "It's only got the one chord, and the whole thing is meant to be like a drone," Emerick writes in his book. Specifically, Lennon wanted his voice to sound "like the Dalai Lama chanting from a mountaintop."

The request had Emerick momentarily stumped. "I was thinking, Well, I've got an echo chamber and...that's all!' " Emerick recalls. "I didn't know what I was going to do. And suddenly, there it was, staring me in the face!" "It" was the studio's Leslie speaker cabinet, a device consisting of a pair of rotating horns and a bass speaker with a rotating baffle. Emerick reasoned that the Leslie's swirling tones might achieve the effect Lennon wanted. Unfortunately, the amp's input consisted of a large multipin jack for connecting it to an electronic organ. Emerick secured the help of Abbey Road maintenance engineer Ken Townsend to break into the Leslie's circuitry and patch in a mic lead. As Lennon's vocal swam through the Leslie, the assembled group listened in awe from the control room, situated high above the studio. "The effect on John's voice was marvelous," says Emerick. Exclaimed McCartney, "It's the Dalai Lennon!" Down in the studio, Lennon, all smiles, gave an enthusiastic thumb-up to Emerick through the control room window. It was an impressive debut for the young engineer. And the session was not over yet.

While the group discussed how to proceed with the track, Emerick turned his attention to Ringo's drums. To his ears, they needed to sound more forceful and present. He knew that he could pick up more of the drums' attack by moving the microphones closer to the source. He was also well aware of EMI's arcane policies about mic placement. "I knew I could get in trouble for breaking the rules," he says. "But I wanted to hear that sound." Emboldened by his success with Lennon's vocal, Emerick proceeded to move the microphones: one for the snare, one for the bass drum and a single overhead mic. He also stuffed a large wool sweater inside Ringo's bass drum and against the head to kill some of the drum's open, ringing tones and accentuate the sound of the beater on the head.

Returning to the control room, the engineer applied the final touch to the signal chain: a Fairchild 660 valve compressor/limiter. Its typical purpose would be to

equalize the dynamic levels of the drum kit and thereby prevent the harsh attacks from overloading the equipment and distorting. Once again in defiance of EMI rules, Emerick turned up its input level, intentionally overloading the device. "The resulting 'pumping' would, I thought, add an extra degree of excitement to the sound of the drums," he writes. Listening to the playback, Starr was amazed. Writes Emerick, " 'What on earth did you do to my drums?' Ringo was asking me. 'They sound fantastic!' " By the end of the session, any doubts the group had about the young engineer's talents had vanished.

When the group reconvened the next day, McCartney presented Emerick with a plastic bag containing tape loops to lay over the backing track. "He'd stayed up the previous night making them on his little Brenell tape recorder," says Emerick. The collection included distorted guitar and bass tones, ringing sounds produced with wineglasses, and numerous indecipherable tones. After listening to them, the Beatles selected five loops to be dubbed onto the backing track.

Commandeering every tape deck from the facility's four studios, Emerick fitted each with one of the loops and patched the machines, via Abbey Road's internal wiring, into Studio Three's mixing console. EMI maintenance staff were recruited to keep the loops taut on the machines by supporting the slack end of each with a pencil. "Communication was only by telephone," Emerick says, "so people were just standing there holding a pencil with a piece of tape flying around it. They had no idea of what we doing." Back in the control room, Martin and Emerick sat at the mixing console, lifting and lowering faders to bring the sound of the loops in and out of the mix. "We 'played' the loops with the faders, just like it was a big synthesizer keyboard."

The result is a musical and at times cacophonous collage of sounds unlike anything heard outside the avant-garde world of musique concrète. Even today, it's difficult to conceive that it was created by the same group that a scant two years before had made its American debut singing "She loves you, yeah yeah yeah" on national TV. Early in the song's creation, Lennon had titled it "The Void." In the end, it became "Tomorrow Never Knows," a nonsensical but nevertheless evocative title provided by Ringo Starr (whose gift for farcical language had previously produced the title "A Hard Day's Night").

The Beatles and their production team couldn't have asked for a more auspicious start to their new record. Lennon's ambitious songwriting, combined with Emerick's inventiveness and the ensemble's radical attitude toward the song's development, established a productive and creative atmosphere that endured throughout the album's sessions. The lone upset occurred a few days after "Tomorrow Never Knows" had been completed, when EMI learned of Emerick's "microphone abuse." "Someone snitched on me, and management found out," the engineer says. A meeting was called to discuss the violation, with the Beatles in attendance. "And the Beatles were defiant. They said, 'This is our new drum sound. This is us now.' " EMI relented and allowed it. "But only on Beatles sessions."

Emerick pushed the waiver to his advantage as the sessions continued. When a quintet of brass players arrived to perform on the next song recorded, McCartney's Motown-inspired "Got to Get You into My Life," the engineer shoved the microphones right into the bells of their instruments, compressing the sound through the Fairchild, just as he'd done with the drums. Likewise, when McCartney fretted that the string octet performing at the April 28 session for "Eleanor Rigby" might sound too saccharine, Emerick situated his microphones just inches from the players' instruments to pick up the rasp of the bows, much to the musicians' disapproval. "They were afraid it would show up the flaws in their playing," says Emerick. "They kept shifting their chairs back from the microphones until George Martin told them to sit still."

Emerick began placing microphones closer to the drums than EMI policy allowed to create his unique sounds.

> WITH *REVOLVER*, IT WAS MORE ABOUT MAKING ***THINGS SOUND DIFFERENT***, RATHER THAN REAL."
>
> — GEOFF EMERICK

Emerick's technique would ultimately prove to be the defining sound of *Revolver*, responsible for not only the album's potent, in-your-face sound but also the distinction with which each instrument stands out in the mix. For years, engineers had exploited the ambient qualities of recording studios, utilizing overhead microphones to pick up not only the overall sound of an ensemble but also the reflected sounds from the studio's wall, ceilings and floor. Here was Emerick doing exactly the opposite. While close miking doesn't completely isolate an instrument's sound from its environment, it does lessen the amount of ambient sound present in the signal, making instruments sound more present and drier. "And the Beatles didn't like ambience," notes Emerick. "I'd try to add a little echo chamber on Paul's bass and he'd always detect it, even the slightest amount." Conversely, any instrument that wasn't close miked, or to which Emerick added reverb, was imbued with a presence that helped it stand out in the mix. All things considered, it's not surprising that, once the industry discovered Emerick's techniques, it adopted them wholesale.

For Emerick, the most surprising aspect of the *Revolver* sessions was that the Beatles entered them completely unrehearsed. "Sometimes they'd come in with a song, and it might be just a half a verse or a half of a chorus," he says. "We might spend two or three hours on it, routining a rhythm track, before they'd say, 'No, it's not working.' And then they'd go back to the drawing board and start from scratch. It was finished when it was finished." Using the studio as a musical incubator was practically unheard of, given the numerous sessions at the busy Abbey Road facility and the subsequent expense. The Beatles would never have been granted such freedom were they not so successful. The practice allowed the group to hone their songs to a degree previously impossible to achieve, and it gave Emerick valuable time to carefully craft the sounds. "If they hadn't rehearsed so much," he says, "I probably wouldn't have come up with some of the things that I did."

The payoff can be heard all over *Revolver*, particularly on the electric guitars. On most previous Beatles recordings, the guitars are all attack, with very little sustain or presence, the main exception being Harrison's 12-string Rickenbacker, which he used to ringing effect on *A Hard Day's Night*. Yet, on *Revolver* tracks like "Taxman" and the stunning Lennon composition "And Your Bird Can Sing," the guitars sound bright and gritty, with plenty of sustain. One reason was the presence of new and powerful amplifiers, including a cream-colored Fender Bassman, two new blackface Fender Showmans with 1x15 cabs, and 120-watt Vox 7120 guitar amps. New guitars for the sessions included Lennon and Harrison's sunburst Epiphone Casinos (a model that McCartney had owned for some time and also used on *Revolver*) and Harrison's newly acquired 1964 Gibson SG Standard.

But *Revolver*'s guitar sounds aren't simply a product of the Beatles' gear. Again, it's down to Emerick's touch with the Fairchild 660 limiter. "I was a great fan of the Fairchild," he says. "It was basically the only tool I had that would give me the sound I was hearing, because it had a lot of presence. I used it on John's vocals, too, but on guitars it was just amazing. Even if you don't make it limit—if you just plug it in and use its circuitry—it sounds like the best tube amp ever. It's warm and present and upfront."

To record *Revolver*'s guitars, Emerick used his beloved Neumann U47 tube mics. These, however, he kept well away from the speakers, "normally about a foot, 18 inches away." This, he says, is where the magic arrived. "That's where it sounded good. I've got to put a lot of that down to the tubes, not only in the guitar amps but in the microphones and mixing console as well. Everything was tube then. Even the tape machine amps were tube."

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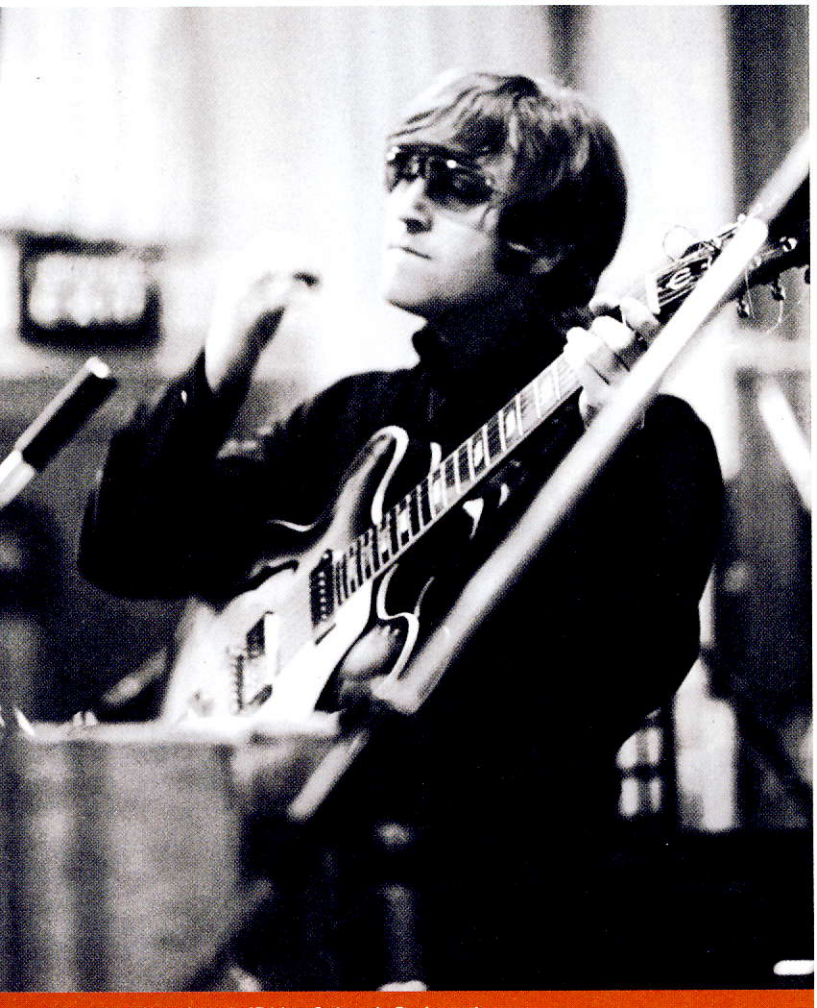

Lennon playing his newly acquired Epiphone Casino at the *Revolver* sessions

Emerick typically recorded the guitars simultaneously on one track. "Mono was the standard for pop music recordings at the time," he says. "It didn't matter if the guitars were on the same track or not, because everything would be coming out of one speaker anyway." The trick, he explains, was to make the two guitars distinct from one another. Again, the Beatles' lengthy rehearsal sessions came in handy. "It was very hard to get the definition and the surrounding echoes or effects on the guitars to make them very distinctive coming over one sound speaker. It's very easy with stereo, 'cause you can have one panned left and one right. But this was a case of getting both distinct guitar sounds out of one loudspeaker, and sometimes you're talking about two hours to work on one guitar. While they would rehearse, I would just keep tweaking the guitar amp, taking a notch of mid out, putting a notch of treble in, and gradually blending and crafting it. Even if it was a half a dB [*of EQ*], it was enough to give the sound its own place [*in the mix*]."

Emerick's magic, however, could not help George Harrison's lead guitar work. Though Harrison had been the Beatles' strongest guitarist in their early days, McCartney soon surpassed him, assuming lead guitar duties on some of his contributions to the group's 1965 album *Help!* Harrison's songwriting was never the equal of Lennon's and McCartney's, yet for *Revolver*, he had exceeded everyone's expectations with "Taxman," a song so good that it was chosen to lead off the album. So it was particularly frustrating for Harrison when, after two hours of struggling to create the song's solo, Martin urged him to let McCartney give it a go. Strapping on his guitar, most likely his Epiphone Casino, McCartney let rip with one of the most stunningly sophisticated and ferocious solos in the Beatles' catalog. Writes Emerick, "It was so good, in fact, that George Martin had me fly it in again during the song's fadeout." Portions of it, played backward, were also applied to "Tomorrow Never Knows."

If Harrison felt humiliated at being shown up, he never said it. Throughout *Revolver*'s sessions, Emerick says, he seemed remote, at best. "When he was playing, he wasn't looking down [*at his instrument*]; he was looking out, away from things, like he was somewhere else. I thought about that as we were writing the book. It suddenly dawned on me: He wanted out of the band." Subsequently, Emerick learned from Harrison's widow, Olivia, that the guitarist had wanted to leave the group during the making of *Revolver*. "He really didn't want to be in the group anymore," Emerick says. "He stuck it out because he was loyal. But he knew he wasn't as good as Paul or John, let's just be honest about it. He really wanted to be, and he wondered how he could be." Harrison found the answer, Emerick believes, through his studies in Eastern religion and meditation, which he'd begun in 1965. In the years after *Revolver*, Harrison seemed to discover the confidence that made him such a distinctive and melodic player in the late Sixties and beyond. "He became the great songwriter and guitarist that he'd wanted to be," Emerick says. "Not to mention a really terrific producer."

Certainly, Harrison's songwriting skills were already improving. In addition to "Taxman," he contributed the rollicking rocker "I Want to Tell You," one of *Revolver*'s more infectious tracks. Despite its buoyant rhythm and melody, the song is, lyrically, a philosophically weighty presentation of communication as a battle between the mind and body, an Eastern point of view with which Harrison framed many of his songs from this period. For that matter, Eastern philosophy informed his lyric for his third *Revolver* contribution, "Love You To." The song is performed almost entirely on Hindustani classical instruments, including the droning stringed instruments sitar and tamboura and traditional hand drums, called tabla. The recording features players from the North London Asian Music Circle, as well Harrison on acoustic and electric guitar and possibly McCartney and Starr on backing vocals and tambourine, respectively.

For Emerick, the "Love You To" sessions were an engineering treat. "It was great to record those instruments," he says. "For the sitars, I used condenser mics—either the [*Neumann*] KM54 or 56—and I went in really close with them." For the tabla, he placed ribbon mics a mere three inches from the heads and processed the signals through an Altec compressor. "Normally the sound of the tabla would have been like *tick-tack*," Emerick says. The compressor, however, gave more prominence to the drums' sustaining tones. "As soon as the player took his hand off the tabla, the compressors came up and the drum went *ba-LOOP*. The first time that came out of the speakers, we were like, 'What was that?' It was a wonderful surprise."

McCartney, having long ago demonstrated the depth and breadth of his songwriting talents, contributed to *Revolver* his most diverse, accomplished and poignant set of songs to grace any Beatles' album. In addition to "Got to Get You into My Life" and "Eleanor Rigby," he served up the delicate "Here, There and Everywhere," the jaunty piano-driven "Good Day Sunshine" and "For No One," a stark production driven by a clavichord. The song features only two of the Beatles—McCartney and Starr—who recorded their parts on May 9. On May 19, a French horn obbligato was added to the song's solo break. Performed by Alan Civil, principal horn player with London's Philharmonia. Neither McCartney nor Martin had any ideas for the solo, except that it should sound baroque. Working from that directive, Civil wrote a solo appropriate to the setting, adjusting it over numerous takes.

Clearly, and despite Harrison's gloomy moods, the cooperative atmosphere that had fueled *Revolver*'s first session remained strong throughout the course of making the album. At no time was that more evident than when the Beatles set to work on "Yellow Submarine." Written for Starr by Lennon and McCartney, its playful sing-along style track was well suited to the drummer's limited vocal range and expression. Yet, behind the song's childlike appeal, the influence of Lennon and McCartney's drug experimentation is obvious, reflected in the colorful, hallucinogenic imagery and the Nirvana-meets-Atlantis communal bliss expressed in its lyrics.

"Yellow Submarine" gave Emerick yet another occasion to invent some sonic tricks. To create the sound of rolling waves, EMI employees were drafted to drag large chains through a metal tub filled with water. Most ingenious was the brief inclusion of a brass marching band fill at

ROBERT FREEMAN / ©APPLE CORPS LTD 2009

FOR YOU, BLUE: Harrison playing his Fender Stratocaster with Sonic Blue finish during the *Revolver* sessions. He and Lennon acquired matching models of the guitar in 1965.

> "GEORGE HARRISON REALLY ***DIDN'T WANT TO BE IN THE BEATLES ANYMORE.*** HE STUCK IT OUT BECAUSE HE WAS LOYAL." — ***EMERICK***

the end of the song's middle section. Over the years, when speaking of *Sgt. Pepper's*, George Martin has described how he and Emerick created a wash of carnival sounds for the song "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite" using a collage of steam organ recordings from the Abbey Road tape library. Apparently, he'd forgotten that they had performed the same trick for the brass band fill on "Yellow Submarine." Emerick says, "It was a question of spending the money on bringing a brass band in just to do 'doodly-doodly-doodly-doo.' In the end, George Martin said, 'Let's take a recording of a brass band from the Abbey Road tape library and chop it up," thereby disguising the source material and avoiding copyright infringement. Emerick says he literally threw the pieces of tape into the air "and then picked them off the floor and stuck them back together again." Amazingly, the reassembled pieces were almost identical to the original (something that also happened on the *Sgt. Pepper's* track), but by swapping a few pieces, Emerick made the finished part indistinguishable from the source material.

As the album's songs came together, the Beatles would frequently join Martin and Emerick in the control room to oversee the mixes. Again, it was an unusual practice; artists typically performed and left the technical work to the production team. "The Beatles had started wanting more control over the final sound, and rightly so," Emerick says. "It was their work, and it was inconceivable to me that they shouldn't have a say in the mixes." It was yet another sign of their musical development, and of their power to break EMI's rigid practices.

In mid June, late into the album's mixing stage, Martin realized that they were one song shy of a full album. At a hastily called session on June 21, the Beatles returned to Studio Two to record the record's 14th, and final, track, "She Said, She Said." Written by Lennon, the song recounted an LSD experience he had with actor Peter Fonda, making this final session an appropriate bookend to the "Tomorrow Never Knows" recordings, which had kicked off the album's production. The Beatles spent nearly nine hours recording "She Said, She Said," during which time mixing on *Revolver*'s other tracks continued in Studio Three to meet the June 22 deadline.

Meanwhile, the Beatles had commissioned artist and musician Klaus Voormann to create cover art for their new album. A friend of the Beatles since their days performing in Hamburg, Voormann combined photographs and pen-and-ink line drawings in an image that beautifully echoed the brilliant psychedelic music contained on the album. Its austere black-and-white design was a welcome touch of understatement in a day of multicolored artistic excess, and it received the Best Album Cover award at the 9th annual Grammy Awards, in 1967.

All that was left was to give the record a name. "Abracadabra" and "Magic Circles" were contenders, neat references to the influential effects of Emerick's studio magic and the tape loops, respectively, not to mention the supernatural effects of drugs. For a moment, at least, they considered calling it "Beatles on Safari," an allusion perhaps to the cover art's pictures of a pith-helmeted George Harrison. Finally, they settled on *Revolver*, a richly suggestive title that referenced the record's motion while it was played and the music's power to, like a gun, be a tool for revolution.

Released in England on August 5, *Revolver* was universally praised in the music magazines of the day. Like every Beatles album, it was a hit, but its songs and production have helped it attain and hold its undisputed position as the favorite of Beatles fans. Prior to its release, McCartney had said of the group's competition, "They'll never be able to copy this one." Apparently, neither could the Beatles. One week after its release, they began their last tour, during which they played not a single track from *Revolver*. It was, in the end, an album to be experienced in its original, and unreproducible, form. ❖

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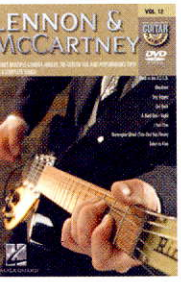

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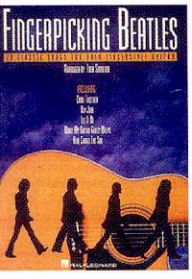

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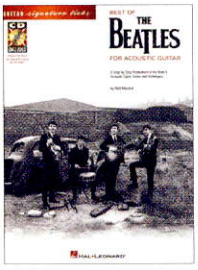

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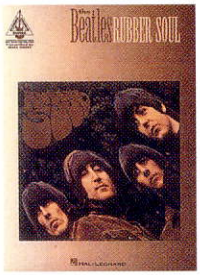

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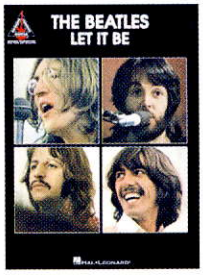

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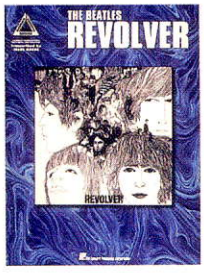

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At Abbey Road to perform "All You Need Is Love" on the live *Our World* TV broadcast, June 25, 1967. Presented some three weeks after *Sgt. Pepper's* release, the event unofficially marked the start of the Summer of Love.

DAVID MAGNUS/REX FEATURES, COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

ROCK'S BIG BANG

In 1967, *the Beatles launched the future of popular music with* Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. *Engineer Geoff Emerick reveals the secrets behind rock and roll's most cataclysmic event.*

by CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

ALL FOUR BEATLES were present, but John Lennon, as usual, was doing the talking. "We don't want to tour anymore," he was saying. "We're sick of it, and no one can hear us anyway for the kids' screaming. We just want to make a record and put that on tour."

Producer George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick stood listening silently. Finally, Martin spoke up. "How can you have a band that doesn't tour? Nobody does that! How are you gonna promote this thing?"

Lennon shook his head. "If we don't have to tour, then we can make music that doesn't have to be played live. We can make sounds that no one has ever heard before."

Emerick laughs, recalling that day at EMI's Abbey Road Studios in November 1966. "And as soon as John said that, everyone turned 'round and looked at me. And I just remember thinking, Well, what do you expect *me* to do?"

The Beatles had good reason to look to Emerick. Though only 20 years old at the time, Emerick had already acquitted himself as one of the record industry's premiere sound designers (alongside Phil Spector and the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson) on the Beatles' previous album, *Revolver*, earlier that year. He had been an Abbey Road engineer just six months when Martin asked him to take over from Norman Smith, the group's previous engineer, who had run the mixing console for the Beatles' prior releases. Emerick had wasted no time rising to the Beatles' growing demands for new sounds. He had channeled Lennon's vocals into a Leslie rotary speaker cabinet on "Tomorrow Never Knows," exploited valve compressors and limiters to add dynamics and texture to otherwise familiar sounds, and pioneered the use of close-miking to make Ringo Starr's drum kit, and other instruments, sound upfront, huge and intimate.

"And now, with *Sgt. Pepper's*, they were looking to me to give them new sounds," says Emerick. "Unfortunately, I had used everything at my disposal on *Revolver*." The British expatriate is sitting in the dining room of his charming home in California's picturesque Laurel Canyon. Nearby, perched on a sideboard, are three Grammy awards he received for his engineering work on the Beatles' *Abbey Road*,

(opposite top) With *Sgt. Pepper's* sleeve designer Peter Blake (behind drum) at the cover photo shoot, March 30, 1967; (above) recording *Sgt. Pepper's* at Abbey Road Studios

Paul McCartney and Wings' *Band on the Run*, and, of course, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

"I didn't have digital plug-ins or effect boxes," he continues. "I was desperate, really. I didn't know what to do. It was like starting over from scratch, getting down to the individual tonalities of the instruments and changing them. They didn't want a guitar to sound like a guitar anymore. They didn't want anything to sound like what it was. And that's part of the genius, if you will, behind *Sgt. Pepper's*. It sounds like nothing that came before it."

IN THE YEARS SINCE it was recorded, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* has been hailed repeatedly as one of the best and most influential albums of all time. If you've ever wondered what all the fuss is about, count yourself among the few who have not drunk the *Sgt. Pepper's* Kool-Aid. From its fluorescent cover to the lysergic hues of its music, *Sgt. Pepper's* mollifies listeners, like shiny objects dangled before a cooing infant. Forget the ripened pop-song genius that is *Rubber Soul*, the brilliant and brash experiment that is *Revolver*, the consummate artistry that is *Abbey Road*... In the reflexive mind of the music consumer, *Sgt. Pepper's* trumps them all, even if it does contain a few dull clunkers like "She's Leaving Home," "When I'm Sixty-Four" and, depending on your generosity of spirit, "Within You Without You."

None of this is to be disrespectful but rather to get to the bottom of the matter. If *Sgt. Pepper's* is so influential today, why? And for that matter, how? It's not because of its cover; album covers haven't mattered since CDs made vinyl records virtually obsolete. It is not because of the contrivances of its "album on tour" concept; concept albums may be alive and well in the worlds of Coheed and Cambria, My Chemical Romance and Mastodon, but, Green Day's *American Idiot* aside, they aren't exactly mainstream successes. As for its songs, you would be hard pressed to find, consistently, music over the past dozen years as brilliant, imaginative or transcendent as *Sgt. Pepper's* tracks like "Fixing a Hole," "Good Morning, Good Morning" and certainly "A Day in the Life."

To see where *Sgt. Pepper's* has been, and remains, an influence, you have to go down into its proverbial grooves—into its sounds and the spirit in which it was recorded. Until its creation, vocals had been the focus of most pop productions; the instruments were mere supporting players. There had been exceptions, of course, most notably on *Revolver* and in the productions of Phil Spector and the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson (whose work on 1966's *Pet Sounds* was inspired by the Beatles' 1965 album *Rubber Soul* and, in turn, proved the catalyst to Paul McCartney's work on *Sgt. Pepper's*).

But *Sgt. Pepper's* turned convention upside down with its truly bizarre sounds: a jumble of calliopes on "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!"; Indian classical instruments on "Within You Without You"; electronic keyboards on "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and "Strawberry Fields" (the first song cut for *Sgt. Pepper's* but released instead as a single while work on the album continued); an orchestral "orgasm of sound" (to quote Martin) on "A Day in the Life"... In *Sgt. Pepper's'* intricate aural tapestry is the sound of four young men rebelling against musical convention and, in doing so, opening wide the door for the sonic experimentation that launched hard rock, punk, metal, new wave, grunge and every other form of popular music that followed. Listen to it today and you can hear the last 40 years of popular music synthesized and ready to burst forth. It's like bearing witness to rock music's own Big Bang.

For all this, much credit must go to Geoff Emerick. By fulfilling the Beatles' demands on *Revolver*, he showed them how much was possible in the studio, setting the stage for *Sgt. Pepper's*. They might have gotten there anyway on their own, but Emerick led the way. "It was a great time of experimentation," he says. "There were no time limits, and as far as

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cost—their attitude was, 'Sod the cost! We're making a masterpiece.' "

Emerick has related much of the story in his 2006 book *Here, There and Everywhere: My Life Recording the Music of the Beatles*. But for this story, we asked him to shed light on the creative methods—the Beatles' and his own—that made *Sgt. Pepper's* so unique. Forty years on, he can remember it all vividly. "It's as though it was two or five years ago. It was groundbreaking what was going on—like going from black-and-white to color. Every day was groundbreaking. Every day."

SOMETHING REVOLUTIONARY was certainly in the studio on the first day, when the Beatles set out to record "Strawberry Fields Forever": John Lennon's Mellotron. It was Paul McCartney who helmed the instrument, using its "Flutes" setting to play the song's intro. "Whether it was serendipity or not, we'd got it and we used it," says Emerick. "You've got to imagine that that was the first time you'd ever heard anything like that. It was like magic! And it really sets the mood, 'cause you'd *never* heard anything like that."

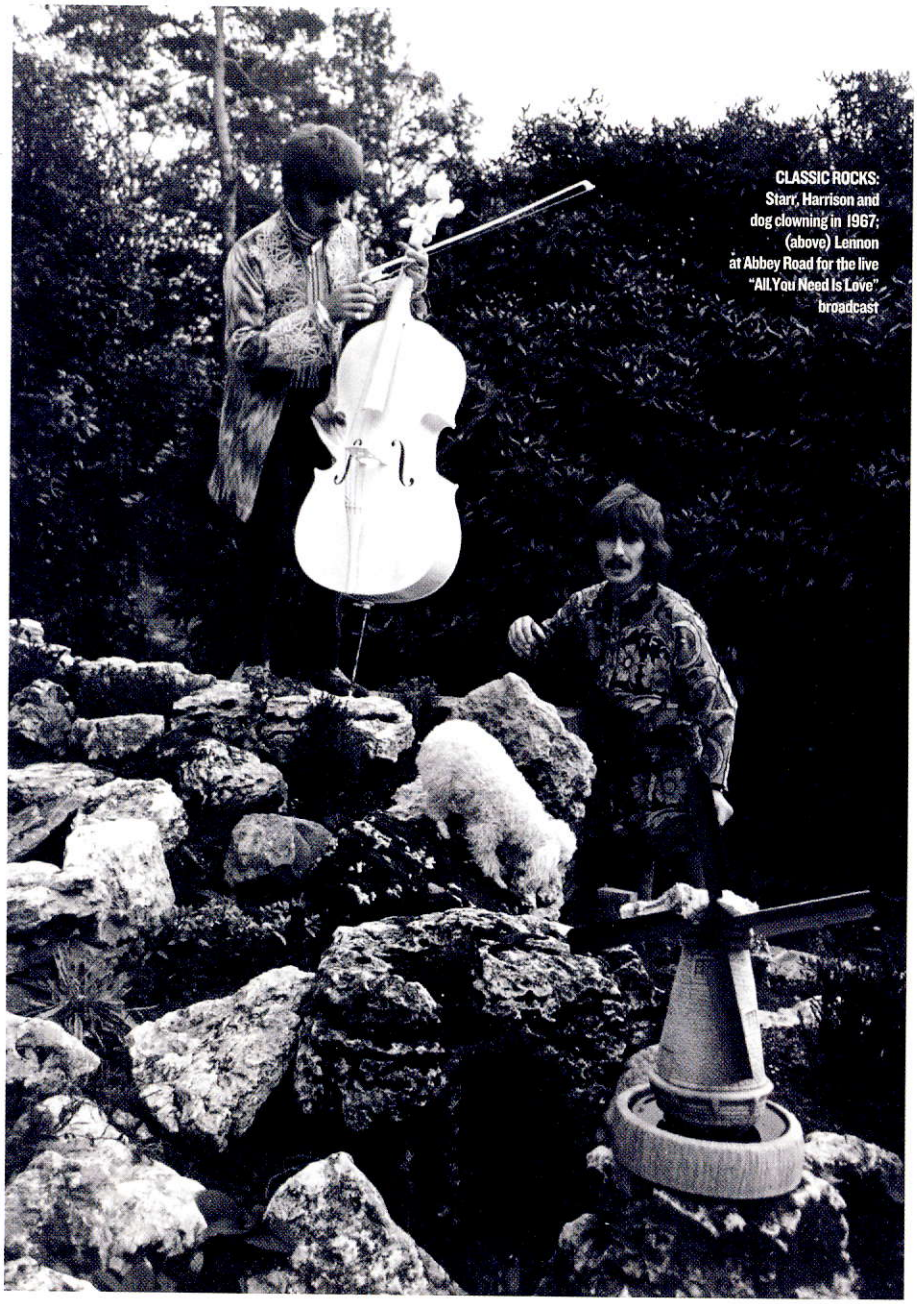
For Emerick, still pondering how he was going to create new sounds for the Beatles, the Mellotron was a lucky break. He, along with Martin and the Beatles, had agreed that they would not repeat their past techniques: no vocals through Leslies, no "Tomorrow Never Knows"–style tape loops, no backward vocals or guitars (though backward hi-hats were allowed on "Strawberry Fields Forever," since the effect had not been applied that way before). "We never did the same thing twice," says Emerick. "It would have been the easy way out when we were stuck for something, but we would never take it."

His position was complicated by the fact that nothing had changed at Abbey Road in the six months since *Revolver* had been completed: there were no new effects or innovations Emerick might exploit to his own ends. For that matter, the Beatles' gear had changed little from what they used previously. On *Sgt. Pepper's*, as on *Revolver*, Lennon and George Harrison used their Epiphone Casinos and Gibson J-160E acoustic guitars; McCartney's Rickenbacker 4001S was his main bass, and he used his Casino and Fender Esquire for rhythm and lead work (much of the lead guitar work on *Sgt. Pepper's* is McCartney's, rather than Harrison's). As for amplification, in late 1966, Vox had delivered to Abbey Road every amp, including prototypes, in its then-new line of solid-state amps, but it's unknown which of these, if any, were used on *Sgt. Pepper's*.

Despite the basic similarities in studio gear and equipment, *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's* sound distinctly different. The former, for all its invention, still sounds like a rock and roll album, with its crunchy guitars and fizzy, warm ambience. The latter is decidedly refined in tone, lacking the low-midrange tones that gave *Revolver* much of its propulsive power. Emerick puts the difference down to two things.

First, the studio: *Sgt. Pepper's* was recorded in Abbey Road's fabled Studio Two, a large room well suited to handling the volume and frequencies produced by pop and rock bands. "Whereas *Revolver* was done in Number Three studio, which is a smaller room. It was very difficult to make a pop record in Number Three, because of its size. It was a dirtier-sounding studio acoustically. It was fine for solo work, but with a rock group, it became difficult to control the sound. Number Two is a brighter studio, and you can get cleaner tones."

In addition, Emerick suspects the mixing console in Studio Two may have had mic preamps different from those in the Studio Three console. Although the consoles were the same model—REDD.51 "Stereosonic" Four-Track Mixer desks—EMI engineers may have swapped out its stock Telefunken microphone amps with an EMI version that was, he says, "cleaner sounding. The Telefunken mic amps were a little more classically orientated, you might say, which would have been suited to Studio Three, whereas



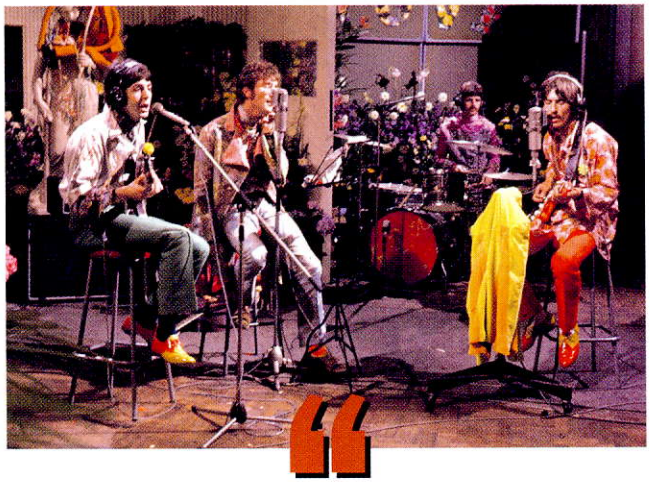
CLASSIC ROCKS: Starr, Harrison and dog clowning in 1967; (above) Lennon at Abbey Road for the live "All You Need Is Love" broadcast

MAL EVANS / REX USA \\ DAVID MAGNUS / REX USA

Studio Two was the pop studio, and the cleaner EMI mic preamps would have been better suited to it."

Second, on *Sgt. Pepper's*, Emerick began refining recording techniques he had initiated on *Revolver*, finding new ways to use them or applying subtle twists on familiar methods. "The only way to approach *Sgt. Pepper's* was to use some of those techniques and sounds from *Revolver* in a more controlled way," he says. "It wasn't as brash—more fine tuned." Emerick recalls exploring new mic placement techniques, such as taping a condenser microphone to the soundboard of a virginal—a harpsichord-like instrument—to achieve a brighter sound from it. Likewise, he found new ways to manipulate echo, by then one of the most common effects in the studio's meager arsenal. For the jaunty piano solo on "Lovely Rita" (played by George Martin), he ran the signal to a tape recorder and applied sticky tape to the machine's tape guides. As the recording tape traveled through the machine, the guides would grab and release it, producing a wobbling sound as the tape passed the playback head. "I sent the output of that to the echo chamber, so it created this very fluttery sounding reverb," Emerick recalls. "What you hear on the record is his straight piano part and the wobbly echo under it, giving the piano its distinctive honky-tonk sound."

Elsewhere on the album, Emerick took advantage of an external equalization device built by Abbey Road's engineering department: the RS 127 "Presence Box." "We didn't have much in the way of EQ control on the console," says Emerick. "In the high-frequency range, you could adjust 5k, and that was it." Built both in rack and stand-alone versions, the RS 127 gave engineers control over three high frequencies—2.7kHz, 3.5kHz and 10kHz—with up to 10dB of boost or cut. It had been used on Beatles tracks long before Emerick began engineering the group's sessions, but never in the fashion in which he employed it. "Often I'd put those in series, and I'd have like 30dBs of 2.7 on the vocals, to really screw them up," he says. " 'Cause the Beatles didn't want voices to even sound like voices. It wasn't a question of a little bit of treble; we just went overboard."



> ON *SGT. PEPPER'S*, THE BEATLES DIDN'T WANT VOICES TO EVEN SOUND LIKE VOICES. ***WE JUST WENT OVERBOARD.***"
>
> — GEOFF EMERICK

And not only on vocals. Throughout the making of *Sgt. Pepper's*, Emerick freely tweaked the frequencies of the signals coursing through the REDD.51. "I would never decrease frequencies," he says. "That's not the way to make things sound different. Plus, there was no way I was ever going to take out frequencies, because those mixing consoles were pretty flat, and the sounds coming through them were basically just sounds. So what I did was always additive to the original signal. But it was really to give it more power.

"That's what it was about, especially for the guitars. I mean, with the tube equipment and those guitars, that 2.7k was just magic. Plus the Fairchild limiter added so much presence to the guitar, it was unbelievable. It made it sound like a different guitar. Even if you didn't limit the sound, just processing the sound through the box made it better."

The long hours spent on the album gave Emerick ample time to figure out solutions to the Beatles' requirements. For the first time, the group was making an album with no deadline in view. Songs would be presented in the studio's confines before they were even completed, so that the group and Martin could work through them together.

"Paul or John would start playing whatever song they had, and then Ringo might start tapping a beat on his legs," says Emerick. "Gradually, they'd go to their instruments and start routining it and coming up with ideas about what instrumentation to use. We'd record the session, and they'd come in the next day and review it. If that wasn't acceptable, they'd change the instrumentation or the rhythm. We'd typically nail it by the end of the next day. That's about average."

Emerick used these opportunities to hatch new sonic ideas and to fine tune the sounds of the instruments. "I was always thinking about what to do or to come up with next. Also, because we were still mixing to mono in those days, I had to work out the details with the two guitars." In 1967, most consumers had monaural phonographs, and AM radio broadcasts were strictly monophonic (FM had yet to emerge as a commercial radio format). Stereo, though increasing in popularity, was still a realm for audiophiles. "It's easy to get definition in stereo, when you're putting one guitar left and one right," says Emerick. "But when they're coming from one sound source, to actually make each one have its own spot and be able to hear every note of each guitar takes a long time." For that matter, the EQ controls on the Beatles' Vox amps of the period were as limited as the controls on Abbey Road's mixing consoles. "So it would sometimes take an hour and a half to two hours to get that sound worked out. I would spend a lot of time moving the mics a short distance from the amps just to hear the slight difference in sound and get it absolutely right."

The mics in question were Neumann U47s, large-condenser tube microphones that were studio workhorses, employed on everything from vocals to guitars to pianos. "They sounded good, that's why I used them," says Emerick. "I could have used a small-diaphragm mic, it didn't sound right. I tried AKG D19s and D20s, but they didn't sound as ballsy; they didn't have that power in the low mids."

Emerick's refined techniques on *Sgt. Pepper's* served the music overall, but the most evident beneficiary was Paul McCartney. His chromatic bass runs are a focal point—the lead instrument, really—on many of the album's songs: "A Day in the Life," "Lovely Rita," and the chorus of "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," in particular. The instrument's distinction on these tracks was the result of Emerick's ongoing effort to improve the bass presence on Beatles tracks. The group had been complaining for years that their records lacked the bottom end of U.S.-produced recordings. In truth, Abbey Road engineers and mastering technicians had been loath to allow loud bass signals onto recording; in the days of vinyl records, the wide contours of bass-heavy grooves could cause a stylus to skip. Erring on the side of caution, they had diminished the power of the bass. Consequently, little effort was made to improve bass tones on recordings.

Emerick, however, had made the bass guitar's presence on the Beatles' recordings a priority from the start. For his first Beatles release, the single "Rain"/"Paperback Writer," he had recorded McCartney's bass using a loudspeaker wired in reverse so that it acted as a microphone, then compressed the results to produce the tight, punchy and well-defined bottom end that predominates on those recordings. For *Sgt. Pepper's*, he went a step further, giving McCartney his own track, onto which he would record his bass parts, usually at the end of the long session day, after the others had left.

"We'd pull his amp out into the middle of the studio," says Emerick. "It would be well past midnight, into the morning. We'd put the mic about six feet away. We used to use the [*AKG*] C12 on the figure-of-eight [*omnidirectional*] seting to grab a bit of studio ambience."

Devoting one of four available tracks to bass would have been an impossible luxury had Emerick and Martin not decided to "bounce" tracks from one four-track machine to another. When the tracks of one tape were filled, they would be mixed and recorded—"premixed" is the word typically used—onto one or two tracks of another four-track tape running on a second machine. New recordings would be added to this second tape on its two available tracks, and if the recording required it,

DAVID MAGNUS/REX FEATURES/EVERETT COLLECTION

the process would be repeated yet again.

But as most musicians know, bouncing analog tracks raises the noise floor of the recording tape, producing greater tape hiss with each new generation. This problem was mitigated somewhat with the introduction of noise-reduction systems from Dolby, in 1965, and dBX, in 1971, but Emerick had no similar extravagance. What he did have was Abbey Road's prized four-track Studer machines, which used one-inch tape. The tape width provided a superior signal-to-noise ratio and kept hiss to a minimum even over one or two bounces. "In America they were using 1/4-inch four-track machines, which would have generated more noise," says Emerick. "So it was our tape machines that allowed me to bounce tracks and to put Paul's bass on its own track. It was one of the few luxuries we could afford ourselves."

Tape bouncing was put to use with the first track produced at these new sessions—"Strawberry Fields Forever"—and the practice was put to use on many of the album's tracks. In this day of virtually limitless digital audio tracks, it is difficult to imagine how Emerick could premix an incomplete recording, particularly when no one, not even the Beatles, knew what additional instruments would be added. His approach in these circumstances was practical.

"I did it as if I was mixing the final record. Once we'd done the premix and transferred it to a new tape, that was it; there was no going back and no way to change the mix on that track. So everything we added from that point on had to complement it. The benefit to that is that we immediately knew whether an overdub fit or not, because if it didn't work with the premix, then it wasn't going on. If, for example, we'd recorded a rather raucous guitar part on the premix, and now we were adding a vocal part, we'd have to make the vocal a tonal complement to the sound of the guitars.

"If anything, that approach made the process easier, because final decisions about instruments and sounds were made as we went along, rather than during the final mixing, where today you'd be dealing with lots of tracks and infinite possibilities."

One such decision was made very early on during the sessions for *Sgt. Pepper's*' final track, "A Day in the Life." From the very first take of the song, John Lennon's vocal is plastered with the heavy, fluttery tape echo heard on the final recording. Nothing of the sort had been heard on a previous Beatles recording. And while decisions about effects are typically made over the course of rehearsals and recording attempts, the echo was obviously worked out before the song was attempted in the studio.

Emerick has an explanation: "We used to put that echo on the headphones for John when he was doing vocals. He didn't like the sound of his voice, and he always needed to have something like echo on it, but only in his headphones. On this particular occasion, we recorded it. I think it sounded so good, we just decided to go with it." Emerick can't recall if the tape machine used for the echo ran at 15 or 30 inches per second, only that he did not use "chamber echo," which was created using one of three highly reflective rooms in the Abbey Road facility.

The song also features one of the most potent drum sounds ever captured. "I always tried to elaborate on the drum sound, because basically it was good to start with," he says. "It was just a matter of making more of it." Emerick had already demonstrated on *Revolver* his facility for getting great sounds from Starr's kit. But an idea had been spinning around in his head, and for "A Day in the Life," he decided to put it to the test.

"My theory was that the tone of the drum was coming from underneath the drum, not from the top, where he was hitting it." Emerick removed the bottom heads from Starr's toms and set microphones underneath to capture the sounds. "I couldn't get a mic boom to fit underneath, so I just wrapped the mics in tea towels and set them in glass Pyrex jugs, with the heads of the mics sticking out, and placed them on the floor underneath." Emerick balanced the sound of the overhead and under-the-kit mics with an external four-fader mixer, since his mixing console did not have enough channels. "I used the hit of the stick as the attack portion of the sound and got the tone from underneath."

The resulting sound is huge, helped along by a fair amount of reverb and Emerick's new trick of lifting the fader as the sound decayed to extend its envelope. "If you listen to Ringo's drum fills on some of the tracks, you'll notice that the level comes up right at the end," he says. "I did that with the guitars, too, lifting the fader at the last note of a solo, when the finger comes off the string, so you can hear that noise. Most engineers are always trying to find ways to hide that, but I'd try to lift that as much as I could during the mixes, because I loved that sound."

It is particularly evident on mono mixes of the album and rather less so on stereo mixes. Perhaps Emerick lifted the faders higher to help the sounds come through in the mono mix, where they would not have the benefit of stereo separation. Then again, it may just be that he gave more attention to the mono mixes. "We spent three weeks doing the mono mixes," says Emerick. "And maybe three days on the stereo." It's no wonder he maintains to this day that *Sgt. Pepper's*, *Revolver* and the singles from this period are best heard in their original mono mixes. "They just sound stronger and tighter. Rhythm is a unit, and it shouldn't be spread out over the stereo picture."

In whatever format listeners heard the album upon its release the first days of June 1967, they generally agreed on one thing: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was a masterpiece—not to mention the soundtrack to the Summer of Love. "Everywhere you went that summer, you would hear it being played," says Emerick. In all, the album received four Grammy awards: "Best Album Cover," "Best Contemporary Album," "Album of the Year" and, for Emerick's contribution, "Best Engineered Recording, Non-Classical."

"We were thrilled, of course," says Emerick. "And of course, people started interpreting it more deeply and regarding it the way you might regard classical music. But you know, when we were making it, we had no idea it would be compared to classical music or that it would still matter to people years down the road. We knew we were making something special; we knew it was good. But we didn't know to what extent it would be important 40 years on. No way."

Under EMI's standards, producers were the only members of the production team who could receive credit on a recording. Martin, recognizing Emerick's contributions to *Sgt. Pepper's*, fought for him to receive an engineering credit, but EMI would not bend. "I thought it was ridiculous," says Emerick. "I didn't even get a Gold record for it. The guy who did the cover [*Peter Blake*] got a Gold record. I've got my Grammy, and the manager thought they should have kept that at Abbey Road. 'Cause there's still this thing at Abbey Road: as far as they're concerned, they still think *they* recorded the Beatles." ❖

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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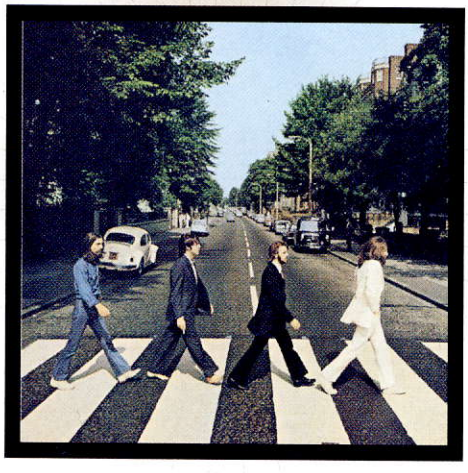

END OF THE ROAD

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It was the Beatles' *final studio work, but it was the start of a new era in recorded music. On the 40th anniversary of* Abbey Road, *Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick tells the story behind the songs and sounds on the group's groundbreaking album.*

by **CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI**

WHY DON'T WE DO IT IN THE ROAD: Posing with Lennon's Rolls-Royce in London, April 9, 1969 (here and prior page). At the time, McCartney was lobbying the band to make a new album after the dismal Get Back sessions.

ON A WARM August morning in 1969, the Beatles walked across Abbey Road and into history. The site of their famous passing took place just outside of EMI Studios, the site of nearly all their recording sessions, in St. John's Wood, north London. Photographer Iain Macmillan, on assignment to shoot cover photos for what would become the Beatles' 12th album, took pictures of the group as it made its way the short distance over the zebra stripes, walking almost in lockstep and heading away from the studio. It was an unassuming image for an album with an unassuming title: *Abbey Road*. But almost immediately upon the record's release that September, the image became iconic, to be copied over the years in tourists' photographs and by recording artists for their own album covers. Apparently, even EMI Studios took inspiration from it. Within months of the record's release, the facility officially changed its name to Abbey Road Studios.

"The irony of it all is that the Beatles hated EMI," says Geoff Emerick, the engineer who manned the studio console for *Abbey Road*, as he had for the entirety of two prior Beatles albums: *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. "They'd been incarcerated in there for so long, recording all the time, and it was a really institutional kind of place, very strict and cheap as well. So to me it seemed like an odd title for them to choose.

"But, of course, in the photograph they're walking *away* from the studio rather than toward it. They're leaving it. Which is what happened after that record, when they broke up. When I saw that photo, it was the first insight I had into the possibility that this would be the Beatles' last album. Because when we were making it, no one knew it would be their last. Certainly I didn't."

September 2009 saw the 40th anniversary of *Abbey Road*, an album that marked not only the end of the Beatles but the decade as well. The Beatles had defined pop culture for much of the Sixties, and it seems fitting perhaps that they made their exit just as a new decade dawned. But it is also ironic that the group, known for pushing the limits of recording equipment in its pursuit of new sounds, was leaving just as a new crop of audio tools was arriving. Recording technology was changing rapidly in the late Sixties, giving producers and engineers a broader range of sonic control than ever before. New audio tools like Dolby noise reduction, as well as effects and instruments such as the Moog synthesizer, were coming into use. State-of-the art transistorized mixing consoles and multitrack tape decks were also changing how records were made and, just as significantly, how they sounded.

Abbey Road was the first album recorded at EMI Studios to use some of this new technology, a fact that explains why, of all the Beatles' albums, it is the most modern sounding—if one can refer to a 40-year-old album as "modern sounding." Certainly, *Abbey Road* tracks like John Lennon's "Come Together," Paul McCartney's "Oh! Darling" and George Harrison's "Something" and "Here Comes the Sun" demonstrate a level of audio finesse exceeding that of any previous Beatles recording. Unquestionably, *Abbey Road* has the most polished production and tones of any Beatles record. In retrospect, it can be regarded as having defined a professional-audio standard for the music that would follow in the Seventies and beyond.

It was Geoff Emerick who helped make these new sounds possible, just as he had when the Beatles made the groundbreaking 1966 album *Revolver* and 1967's *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. As he described in his 2006 autobiography *Here, There and Everywhere*, Emerick had been friendly with the group, in particular bassist Paul McCartney, since early in the Beatles' career. Inventive, and quietly rebellious toward EMI's arcane regulations, Emerick began to craft an entirely new sound for the Beatles during the making of *Revolver*, by placing microphones closer to instruments than EMI permitted, applying massive amounts of compression and limiting to the instruments and vocals, and using other revolutionary techniques. His innovations took the band to even more extreme audio realms on *Sgt. Pepper's* and resulted in some of the group's most fun and spirited recording sessions.

But by the time the group returned to EMI to record their 1968 double album, *The Beatles* (a.k.a. the White Album), the mood had soured. Tensions between the band members were near the breaking point. Lennon and McCartney assumed greater independence from the band and from each other, often working on their songs in separate studios within EMI. Ringo Starr, the most easygoing member of the group, quit for a brief time when he

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felt his services as a drummer were being taken for granted, and McCartney aggravated the others with his repeated attempts to re-record his song "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da." After weeks of toiling in the worsening atmosphere, Emerick walked out and didn't return.

"I was on the verge of a breakdown during the making of the White Album," he explains. "The emotional stress was too much for me. I've got to be honest with you: I've never sat down and listened to the album from end to end, and I never will. It was too depressing a time for me."

The Beatles carried on without him. After the White Album's November 1968 release, the band attempted to reconnect by recording a new set of songs live in the studio. The "Get Back" recordings, as they were known, proved even more difficult for the Beatles and wouldn't see the light of day until 1970, when they formed the basis for the group's posthumous release, *Let It Be*. During the rehearsal and recording sessions, which together ran for nearly all of January 1969, Harrison and McCartney bickered, and Lennon spent much of his time in the company of his soon-to-be wife, Yoko Ono. George Martin, the Beatles' producer from their first recording session forward, was all but an observer to the proceedings, looking on as the band fractured.

Lennon in 1969 with his Epiphone Casino. He stripped the guitar of its sunburst finish in 1968, preferring the sound of the natural wood.

Emerick, despite his bad feelings over the White Album sessions, had not walked away from the Beatles entirely. McCartney, with whom he had developed a warm relationship, asked him to oversee construction of the group's studio being built at their new record label, Apple. Emerick says, "Paul and I obviously liked each other. There was a lot of respect there."

Soon, though, he found himself drawn back into the studio with the group and George Martin. Although the Get Back sessions ended on January 31, the Beatles began recording new songs within a month, even though they had no specific plans at the time to make another album. Unlike Get Back, the new sessions were fairly productive. Over the next four months, the Beatles showed some evidence that they were still a functioning group as they continued writing and recording tracks for new songs, many of which would ultimately end up on *Abbey Road*, including "I Want You (She's So Heavy)," "Oh! Darling," "Octopus's Garden" and "You Never Give Me Your Money."

But the music seemed without purpose, and McCartney was growing restless. He began lobbying his band mates to return to the studio and make a proper album, just as they used to. Harrison and Starr apparently needed little persuading, but Lennon was less than enthusiastic. He'd been enjoying his new life with Ono and working on their experimental music projects. Eventually, he grudgingly agreed to participate. Says Emerick, "I believe they had some private meetings and tried to bury the hatchet and work together as a group."

Next, McCartney had to persuade George Martin to produce the record. Emerick recalls, "George Martin said he would do it only if he could record it like we used to, having a bit of fun and without all the bickering going on in the studio. Paul told him that was the way it was going to be, and they sorted out a lot of their problems."

When McCartney approached Emerick about engineering the album, he accepted immediately. "I could hardly refuse, seeing as I was employed by them at the time building their studio," he says, laughing. His duties on Apple's studio, however, meant Emerick would not be available to the Beatles all the time, and his duties on *Abbey Road* were shared with EMI engineer Phillip MacDonald.

George Martin booked the Beatles in EMI Studios for the months of July and August. Returning to the control room of the facility's Number Two studio, Emerick got a surprise. In recent months, EMI had updated the room with the studio's first transistorized mixing console expressly built for recording, the TG12345. (It was preceded by the RS147, a small solid-state mixer installed in a room used for remixes.) Previously, every electronic recording made at EMI Studios had been made with tube consoles and decks. But by 1969, tubes were out and transistors—then state-of-the-art technology—were in. Unlike tubes, transistors could be cheaply mass-produced and within reasonably similar tolerances. They offered other advantages too, mostly of a technical nature. But whatever their benefits, they didn't sound like tubes. And for a group that had spent the better part of its career crafting its sounds with tube recorders and consoles, the new mixer was an unwelcome modernization.

"We had trouble getting the same kind of sounds they were used to," Emerick says. "So there were a lot of long faces for the first few days. But there was no way the old mixing console could be brought in, so we went along with it."

Once Emerick and the Beatles adjusted to the new sounds, however, the results were simply stunning. Though the sound of the transistorized console lacked the fullness, richness and depth of tube equipment, it was smooth, airy and transparent. And those qualities worked out brilliantly for *Abbey Road*.

Emerick says, "The new recording console, that specific one, gave the original rhythm tracks a certain texture that wasn't as aggressive and upfront and hard as the tube desk would have given us. And that sound was well suited to a lot of the songs they brought in for the album. In addition, because the original rhythm tracks were sort of more subdued, the overdubs were a little softer and less harsh as well. Everything sat together a little easier in the mix. So to me that's why that album has got the texture it's got. Had we done it through that tube desk, I think it would have sounded a lot different."

In addition to the new console, Emerick was able to use an eight-track tape deck on a Beatles recording for the first time since he began working with the group. Like the new console, the eight-track opened up all sorts of new creative possibilities. Emerick says, "It was actually the greatest step ever. It gave me a great deal more flexibility with positioning things in the mix. Before, when we were recording with a four-track, I'd end up with, say, two guitars, keyboards and bass guitar on one track. But with the eight-track, for the first time I could record drums in stereo and spread the instruments out properly."

The drums and bass benefited most from the new technology. The console's clarity produced more distinct low-end tones, allowing the pieces of Starr's kit to be heard individually and capturing the supple tones of McCartney's bass without muddying the bottom end of the frequency spectrum. The benefits for McCartney are most evident on "I Want You (She's So Heavy)" and especially on "Something," where his bass lines move in smooth counterpoint to Harrison's vocal, shadowing, rather than competing with or overpowering them. Starr's drums, for that matter, never

JAK KIRBY/RETNA UK

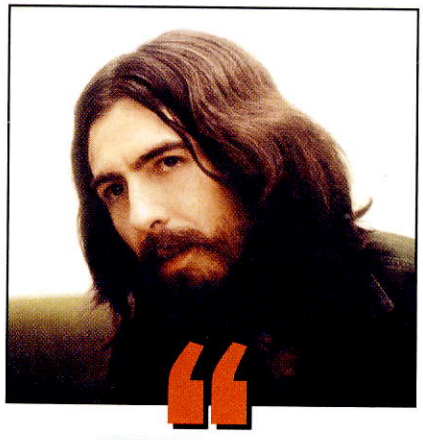
The Beatles, George Martin and Yoko Ono listening to playbacks in Apple's basement studio during the troubled Get Back sessions, January 1969

were quite so present on any of the Beatles' previous albums. And when he pounds away at his kit, as he does for his solo on "The End," the sound is loud and clear, yet it doesn't overwhelm the listener.

The effect of EMI's new console is less obvious on Harrison's guitar work, perhaps because the guitarist's tone is itself so compelling. Though he had shown himself to be a competent and at times inventive soloist on previous Beatles recordings, *Abbey Road* demonstrates that Harrison's facility on the instrument had grown by leaps and bounds since even the Get Back sessions just months earlier, as if he had followed after Robert Johnson and made his own deal with the devil. Harrison's slide work, in particular, is outstanding on *Abbey Road*. His mellifluous lead lines were more expressive than anything he'd done before, demonstrating a newfound confidence and connection with his instrument and creative muse. To enhance those liquid tones, Harrison used a Leslie rotary speaker cabinet, which, together, with his slide work, formed the basis of his new signature sound.

Emerick says, "George really came into his own on *Abbey Road*. For the first time he was speaking out and doing exactly what he wanted to do. And, of course, he wrote those beautiful songs, and we got a great new guitar sound."

Harrison's songwriting, like his guitar playing, had rapidly matured. In addition to "Something," he contributed "Here Comes the Sun," another of *Abbey Road*'s standout tracks. For Emerick, who had previously seen Harrison as the band's least confident and at times least involved member, it was a sea change. The guitarist's confidence was especially evident when he recorded his guitar solo for "Something." Days after he first tracked it, Harrison decided he was unhappy with his tone and phrasing and asked to redo it. "But we only had one track available," Emerick explains, "and we had to use that for the orchestral overdubs." Undeterred, Harrison said he would cut a new solo live, with the orchestra, onto the one remaining track. "He certainly rose to the occasion and pulled it off brilliantly," Emerick says.



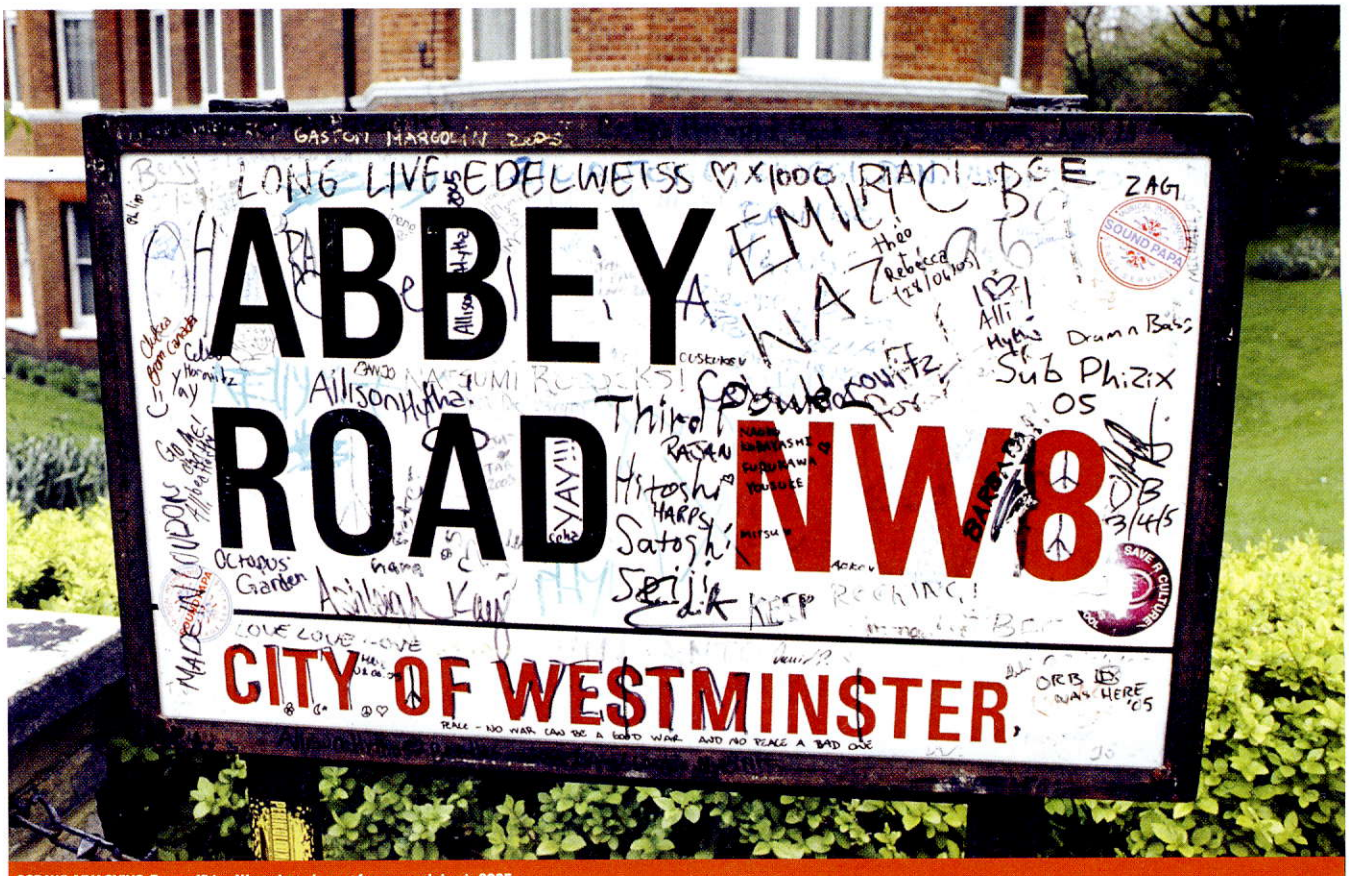
"GEORGE REALLY CAME INTO HIS OWN ON *ABBEY ROAD*. FOR THE FIRST TIME ***HE WAS SPEAKING OUT*** AND DOING EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTED TO DO."
— *GEOFF EMERICK*

Unfortunately, it's difficult to determine precisely what guitars, basses and amps were used on *Abbey Road*. Few photos were taken at the sessions, and even Emerick can't recall what was played. "I was too busy setting up mics and getting sounds," he says. Considering the short amount of time between the Get Back sessions and *Abbey Road*, it's likely that the group used the same gear. That would include for Lennon an Epiphone Casino and Martin D-28; for Harrison his Gibson Les Paul, Fender Strat and Fender Rosewood Telecaster; and for McCartney his 1963 Hofner bass, Rickenbacker 4001S, Martin D-28 and Casino. Amps likely included silverface Fender Twin Reverbs and a Bassman, as well as Harrison's Leslie 147RV cabinet.

In addition, there was one new piece of gear at the *Abbey Road* sessions: George Harrison's Moog synthesizer. At the time the unwieldy instruments were made up of modules that had to be patched together manually to produce sounds, and a fair amount of technical knowledge was required to create even the most basic sounds. Emerick says, "Mike Vickers of Manfred Mann had one of those as well, and he came into the studio to show George how it operated and how to get sounds. We used it for the first time on 'Because' to create that French horn sound on the song—which was absolutely amazing for that time. It was the first time we'd ever heard that sound coming from anything but a French horn."

To the Beatles' and Emerick's credit, the Moog

TOP: COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; TOM HANLEY/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA LTD.



SCRAWL MY LOVING: Fan graffiti on Westminster's most famous road sign, in 2005

JAY BLAKESBERG/RETNA LTD.

was used sparingly and almost always in a musical way—for the playful solo on McCartney's "Maxwell's Silver Hammer," as a shimmering texture on "Here Comes the Sun" and as a complement to McCartney's bass guitar on "Mean Mr. Mustard." Emerick says, "All the synthesizer sounds on *Abbey Road* integrate so well with the instruments. You never think of them as synthesizer sounds but as just another instrument."

The sole exception to this was Lennon's "I Want You (She's So Heavy)." As the song moved toward its climactic conclusion, Lennon asked to have a wash of white noise from the synthesizer applied over the track until it nearly drowned out the instruments. "John was into his experimental music with Yoko, and into her conceptual artwork," Emerick says. "And 'I Want You' is an instance where he brought that in on *Abbey Road*."

By any account, Lennon's interest in the sessions was cursory. In the week before recording began, he and Ono had been in a car accident while on vacation. Although Lennon was virtually unscathed, Ono had been injured, and in the course of her treatment the couple learned that she was pregnant. Afraid to leave his wife alone, Lennon had a bed brought into the studio so that he could be near her. Though his band mates attempted a show of tolerance in the face of the intrusion, Lennon was often ill-tempered toward them and made his displeasure with the sessions evident. "I honestly don't know what his frame of mind was at that time," Emerick says. "I know he wasn't 100 percent into the album. And I didn't realize at the time that he was taking heroin, which almost certainly affected his state of mind."

Lennon was particularly grumpy when it came to "Maxwell's Silver Hammer," McCartney's vaudevillian-style contribution to *Abbey Road*; Lennon called it "granny music." Emerick recalls, "John upset Ringo at one point when he complained about his drum playing on 'Polythene Pam.'" By the end of the session, Starr had figured out a new approach, but Lennon refused to continue working on the song. "Ringo got pissed off and took off for a couple of days," though he eventually recut his drum part.

Most of all, perhaps, Lennon was unhappy with McCartney's plan for the 16-minute medley that extends from track nine, "You Never Give Me Your Money," to track 16, "The End." "Oh, John hated the medley," Emerick says. "He was totally against it," though he came around after McCartney asked him to contribute some songs to it. Lennon responded with a trio of compositions: the gentle "Sun King," the bluesy "Mean Mr. Mustard" and the all-out rocker "Polythene Pam."

Despite Lennon's protests about the medley, by all accounts he enjoyed recording the sequenced guitar solos that bring "The End" to its climax. "Paul went first, then George, then John, and they repeated the sequence in that way twice," Emerick explains. "They knew they had to finish up with something big, and the solo was just the thing. Originally they couldn't decide if John or George would play it. Eventually they said, 'Well let's have the three of us do it.'

"Hearing that performance was unbelievable. And it was all done live, in one take. They rehearsed it beforehand, and the execution of it was absolutely on the money. And when it came time to record it, Yoko, who was in the control room, started to follow John into the studio, and he said 'No, love, not this time.' He wanted it to be just him and his mates.

"When they were finished, everyone beamed. I think in their minds they went back to their youth and all those great memories of working together as a band. Suddenly there was just this great vibe in the studio. It was just superb."

Paul McCartney's promise to George Martin—that the Beatles would make an album the way they used to, without all the fighting—was fulfilled, if only at this session. Years after *Abbey Road*'s release, George Martin recalled that, "It was a happy album because everybody knew it was going to be the last." It's a statement that vexes Emerick to this day.

"How did he know it was going to be the last one?" he asks. "I can't remember anyone on any session saying it was going to be their last album. For that matter I was still building their studio at Apple, which at that time was not going to be a commercial enterprise—it was going to be *their* studio, for them and the acts they signed to Apple."

Whether it was intended to be the Beatles' swansong or not, *Abbey Road* heralded the start of a new age in recording, a masterpiece recorded on the cusp of a new technological era. Emerick received two awards for his efforts. One was a Grammy for Best Engineering. The other was an album credit, his first on a Beatles album: "On the back of the record jacket, it says, 'Thanks to George Martin, Geoff Emerick and Phillip MacDonald,' though it doesn't say who did what. But the very fact that any of us were mentioned—that came from the Beatles, not from EMI." ❖

THE BALLAD OF JOHN

Yoko Ono and some of John Lennon's closest collaborators examine the solo career of the man who taught the world to imagine.

BY ALAN DI PERNA

A **MOOD OF ANTICIPATION** surrounded the December 1970 release of John Lennon's first solo album. The Beatles had just disbanded, and the Summer of Love had given way to a winter of political discontent as the Vietnam War raged on. Lennon had recently divorced his first wife, Cynthia, and married avant-garde artist Yoko Ono. Nothing less than a major statement was expected from the man who had always been considered the Beatles' resident intellectual.

And Lennon delivered. *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* opens on a suitably dramatic note: with the ominous tolling of church bells. A death knell for the Beatles? For the Sixties? Perhaps the bells are meant to recall a death that devastated John Lennon when he was 17 years old. Over pealing piano chords, John's plaintive voice sings one of the most momentous opening lines in all of rock: "Mother, you had me, but I never had you."

The naked emotional force of these words jolted through rock culture like an electric current. Every self-respecting Beatles fan knew Lennon's story. How his parents had divorced at an early age and how he'd been raised by his aunt. How his mother Julia was killed in an automobile accident just as John was becoming close to her once again. But to hear him sing about all this was painful. The coda, in which Lennon repeatedly screams, "Mummy don't go, Daddy come home," was particularly disquieting. No rock lyric had cut that close to real life before.

Many songs on the *Plastic Ono Band* album were a direct outgrowth of primal scream therapy, an intensive course of psychological treatment, which John and Yoko underwent in 1970. Patients who go through the therapy are led through a process of shedding their layers of psychological defenses and confronting the unresolved crises of their early lives by literally "screaming the pain away." The *Plastic Ono Band* album is primal scream therapy transformed as art.

"It is classic rock at its best," Yoko Ono says of the album. "The starkness of that record is very different from the kind of sound that people were used to hearing from the Beatles. I think it was very appropriate for John's first solo album."

Plastic Ono Band served clear notice that John Lennon's identity as a solo artist would be dramatically different from his role as Beatle John. By the time he stepped out on his own, Lennon had grown weary of the escapist fantasy that had been central to Beatles mythology ever since *A Hard Day's Night*. Largely abandoning the well-turned love conceits and hallucinogenic imagery of his Beatles years, John began writing in plain words about topics ranging from politics to painfully personal issues. His solo catalog is one grand exercise in seeing just how much truth can be loaded onto the classic verse/chorus/bridge rock song format. The experiment didn't always work: Lennon's version of the truth sometimes swamped the three-minute musical vehicle that was his

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS

Lennon playing acoustic guitar at home in 1964, around the time that the Beatles filmed *A Hard Day's Night*

chosen medium. His notoriously incisive verbal wit occasionally deserted him in political contexts, giving rise to the empty sloganeering of tunes like "Woman Is the Nigger of the World" and "Power to the People." But even Lennon's less successful efforts were noble in their intent, and his triumphs provided rock with many of its most memorable and important songs.

IMAGINE / Once, in a self-deprecating moment, Lennon described *Imagine* as a "sugarcoated" version of the *Plastic Ono Band* record. While its production is certainly sweeter than its predecessor's, *Imagine* has all the bite of *Plastic Ono Band*, particularly on tracks like "Crippled Inside" and "How Do You Sleep?" Lennon's withering indictment of his former bandmate and writing partner, Paul McCartney. At the same time, Lennon seems less defensive and scarred on *Imagine*, which gives rise to delicately beautiful classics like "Jealous Guy," "Oh My Love" and "How?" Led off by a title track that has become a great anthem of global consciousness, *Imagine* is Lennon's best-known and most loved solo work.

Drummers Alan White and Jim Keltner were among the musicians invited to the Lennons' stately English home at Tittenhurst Park, in Ascot, to cut tracks for *Imagine*. John had an eight-track studio (then state-of-the-art) built right off the kitchen. The musicians lived and worked in an idyllic, communal environment. "We'd all sit and have dinner together and then go back in the studio," White recalls. "I think I spent about eight or 10 days at his house. They were having building work done at the same time, so there were only a few bedrooms that were operational. I remember after we finished recording one evening, John wanted to watch a TV program. Eric Clapton, [*bassist*] Klaus Voormann and I were all in the studio that day. There was only one TV working in the whole house and it was in John's bedroom. So we all laid on his bed and watched this TV program. It was all very homey like that."

As with the *Plastic Ono Band* album and the 1969 "Instant Karma!" single, Lennon shared *Imagine*'s production duties with Ono and the legendary Phil Spector, whose mid-Sixties hits for groups like the Ronettes and Crystals had been hugely influential on Lennon. Yet, even with a record-making mastermind like Spector in attendance, Lennon was clearly in charge. Beatles studio lore has tended to paint Paul McCartney as decisive and aggressive in the studio and Lennon as impulsive, with little patience for the small details of recording. But as demonstrated on the *Lennon Anthology*, the 1998 box set of his unreleased demos and studio outtakes, Lennon could be a confident and decisive figure in the studio. Right until the end of his life, he made records the old-fashioned way: live in the room, counting down takes, leading and supporting his players through every step of the process.

"I think [*the*] box set proves John was an incredible producer and arranger," Ono says. "He didn't need anybody else. He was very clear-headed and quick to notice, 'That musician's not playing what he should.' You'll notice that he's kind of instructing them. In his solo years he really wanted to prove that he could do it on his own, now that he was no longer with the other three [*Beatles*]."

"John was the kind of person who you knew had a strong leadership instinct as soon as he walked in the room," says White, who played drums on many early Lennon solo recordings and concerts. "In the studio he always had things very well planned out. Before we cut 'Imagine' and

ASTRID KIRCHHERR K & K/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

SOME TIME IN NYC: John and Yoko walking on Central Park West at 73rd Street, April 2, 1973

all the other [*tracks*], John would show us all the lyrics for each of the songs, so that everybody who was playing on it knew exactly what the message of the song was."

"Imagine" originally had a prominent—intrusive, perhaps—harmonium part. White recollects that the decision to lose the harmonium came fairly early in the recording process, and that it didn't take too long to arrive at a definitive master take of what would come to be the song that is most closely identified with the post-Beatles Lennon.

> **"WHEN JOHN WAS ON RHYTHM GUITAR, YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE GROOVE. HE WAS AMAZING WITH THAT. *AND THAT'S WHERE HIS CONFIDENCE LAY.* HE KNEW."** — *JIM KELTNER*

Keltner had been staying at Clapton's house, working on material by Clapton and Steve Winwood, when a call came through from Phil Spector inviting him to Lennon's sessions. "John would generally have little sheets mimeographed for us that had all the chords and the basic structure of whatever song we were working on," Keltner recalls. "We would refine it in our own way, for our own needs. He would play it and sing it for us, generally one time. And then we'd start recording. The structure of his songs was so complete that they kind of played themselves. Working with John, it was very clear, when you'd hear the song, what had to happen. John was very demanding of guitar players especially. Being a guitar player himself, he would lean on them more."

White moved over to vibraphone when Keltner came in to play drums on "Jealous Guy." "Just for [*acoustic*] separation, I played the vibraphone in the bathroom, which was really tiny," says White. "John had a bathroom right off the studio and I had to leave the door open about a three-inch crack when they were cutting the track out there."

Keltner also played drums on "I Don't Want to Be a Soldier," a track that Lennon and his band had been struggling with. (An earlier take of the song, with Jim Gordon on drums and Keltner on percussion, appears on the *Lennon Anthology*.) "I had the advantage of watching Jimmy [*Gordon*] struggle with it and making up my own part in my mind," says Keltner. "It was a quirky kind of phrasing that John was known for. He'd do funny, odd time signatures that he didn't realize were odd."

A drummer who has played with just about everyone in the rock pantheon, Keltner rates Lennon "one of the greatest ever" on rhythm guitar: "John had impeccable time. Most of the really great artists I've worked with have been like that: Neil Young, George Harrison when he plays rhythm, Ry Cooder... When John was on rhythm guitar, you didn't have to worry about the groove; you were home. He was amazing with that. And that's where his confidence lay—he knew. When he said he was the greatest guitar player, that's what he meant. And he was right. You just watch all those Beatles live performances and listen to that groove. That was coming from him. All the rest of it was gravy. That's what all the great rock and roll bands are like. The groove comes straight from the rhythm guitar."

Keltner's participation on *Imagine* proved to be the beginning of a

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Backstage at Madison Square Garden with Elephant's Memory and Phil Spector (front), August 1972

long-term working partnership and friendship with John and Yoko. He would go on to play on four more Lennon solo albums, plus many of his concert and television appearances. "Very shortly after *Imagine*, John and Yoko moved to New York, and they called me once they'd settled there," Keltner remembers. "They told me they wanted me to continue working with them. They said, 'We're not sure what we're gonna do, but we want you to do it with us.' From there on, I was just on a cloud the whole time."

SOME TIME IN NEW YORK CITY / Lennon's third solo album reflects the profound changes—geographic, political and domestic—that he and Yoko experienced after *Imagine*. The Lennons went to New York late in 1971 to search for Yoko's daughter, Kyoko, who'd been abducted by her father, Tony Cox. Despite the unhappy circumstances that brought them to New York, they ended up loving the city that had been Ono's home before she met Lennon. "I would always be telling John about the life I had in New York City," she says. "And that sounded much more exciting for him than what he was experiencing then in Kenwood [*the Beatles-era home he'd shared with his first wife, Cynthia*], or wherever. And once we came to New York, we just kind of decided to live here. We went from living in a beautiful, palatial house at Ascot to a little two-room bedroom apartment on Bank Street [*in Greenwich Village*]. And we were saying, 'This is great!' "

The Beatles' fame had made Lennon a virtual prisoner in a succession of English mansions, unable to move about freely in public for fear of being recognized and mobbed. In New York City, he found he was able to roam the streets readily and undisturbed. He eagerly took to Greenwich Village's active, colorful street scene and befriended singer/activist David Peel, who'd earlier become the toast of the East Coast hippie scene with his songs "Have a Marijuana" and "Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker." The radical left-wing movement in America, which had coalesced in opposition to the Vietnam War, was at the forefront of youth counterculture in the early Seventies. The Lennons, who'd always had deep political commitments, plunged headfirst into "the movement." Radicalism became an all-consuming passion for them, as primal scream therapy had once been.

"All our work was like a diary," Ono says. "First we were doing personal things about each other and the experiences we'd had, but then political concerns became a part of our lives. So it just came out like that. That's another part of the diary, I suppose."

It was Yippie (Youth International Party) leader and Chicago Seven trial defendant Jerry Rubin who got the Lennons together with their new backing group, Elephant's Memory. John and Yoko embraced this hirsute bar band from upstate New York but brought in Jim Keltner as "insurance." "John and Yoko liked Elephant's Memory because they were a real street punk type of band," Keltner says. "They liked their energy. They were a good bunch of guys, and we had fun. But John and Yoko wanted me there too, as a little cushion."

With the newly christened Plastic Ono Elephant's Memory Band, Lennon and Ono recorded *Some Time in New York City* (1972), an album of well-intentioned but generally less-than-inspiring political songs that John later said he was sorry he'd released. "That one, we both kind of regretted," Yoko admits. "When we were doing it, we thought it would be great to make it like a newspaper—put it out really quick, and with songs that were like newspaper articles, all about what was happening right then. We felt the whole thing

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should have a rough quality, like newsprint." The concept was carried over to the album's cover art, which was laid out like a daily paper. "We thought it was an interesting idea. But nobody got it. So I felt awful. Sales were bad, et cetera. It made things kind of difficult for us. The success of *Imagine* was soon forgotten. So of course we regretted it. The funny thing is, in 1985 I was invited along with other artists and religious leaders to Moscow by Gorbachev. And *Some Time in New York City* was one of the biggest hits there. All of the kids knew that album. And I thought, All right, John! Are you listening today?"

Ono says political songs were the only type of musical material she and John would actively co-write: "We were very independent of each other. The only time that we were open to creating together was when it was a political cause—when it wasn't artistic. [*laughs*] Like 'Luck of the Irish' and a lot of the songs on *Some Time in New York City*. That sort of thing was okay, but if it was artistic, we felt, 'It has to be mine or yours.' One of us would have to take creative responsibility for the artwork from beginning to end."

The Lennons' political activism cost them dearly. As was later proven in court, they became the object of FBI surveillance, illegal phone tapping and general harassment. In March 1972, an order was issued to deport Lennon from the U.S. on the basis of an earlier minor drug conviction in England. It was the start of a difficult and protracted legal battle that would take a tremendous emotional toll on John and Yoko.

MIND GAMES / By 1973, the Lennons were ready to enter a new phase of their artistic and personal lives. They'd found a new home in the Dakota, a luxury apartment building on Manhattan's Central Park West; Tittenhurst was sold to Ringo. In addition, the Elephant's Memory Band were dismissed, having outlived their usefulness.

"We were not really good at finding people to work with," Yoko admits. "You can hire session musicians, but I think both of us were too big headed to create a band that we could move along with. I mean Elephant's Memory were pretty good; they were very funky. But you see, John wanted to move on; he didn't want to use the same band. So with *Mind Games*, he used a different group of people."

Among the players drafted for the album were New York session guitar ace David Spinozza and pedal steel great Sneaky Pete Kleinow, who imparts a country rock feel to tracks like "Tight A$," a style that was certainly a departure for the solo Lennon. Lyrically, the album strikes a balance between the political and the personal, a mix that is generally more satisfying than *Some Time in New York City*'s stridently one-dimensional polemics. "Free your mind and society will follow" seems to be the message of *Mind Games*. This idea comes across most eloquently on the title track. With its descending major-scale chord progression and "love is the answer" chorus, "Mind Games" is reminiscent of Lennon-penned Beatles classics like "All You Need Is Love." Included on the *Lennon Anthology* are two fascinating early drafts of the song, both of them simple piano-and-vocal cassette demos. Each version's chorus is pretty much in place, but one takes an all-too-familiar "I'm sorry, Yoko" tack in the verses, while the second employs the shopworn Sixties slogan "Make love, not war" as a verse lyric. Somewhere between the demos and the final master, Lennon found a lyrical approach that deftly avoids both those sand traps.

"I still get a tear in my eye when I hear 'Mind Games,' " Jim Keltner says. "I remember listening to the playbacks with John, and I kept singing this high part to him. John started singing it, too. And later on, when I heard the finished record, he had put that line into the string part."

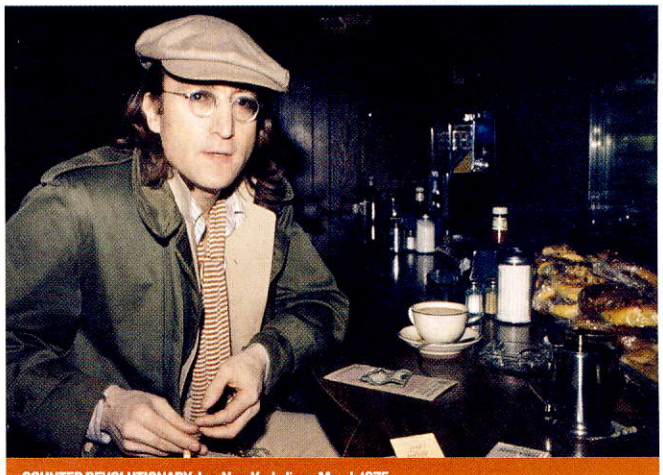
Shortly before the release of *Mind Games* in November 1973, the once inseparable Lennons stopped living together. The move was apparently instigated by Yoko. It's a rare woman who, for the greater good of her marriage, not only sends her husband off on a yearlong binge but also appoints an attractive young woman to accompany him. But that is exactly what Ono did. Lennon departed for Los Angeles with his and Yoko's longtime personal assistant, May Pang. The two became lovers, and Lennon embarked on a dark period of his life generally known as the Lost Weekend. "[*Yoko*] don't suffer fools gladly," Lennon later quipped vis-à-vis his banishment from the Dakota, "even if she's married to him."

ROCK 'N' ROLL / In Los Angeles, Lennon quickly fell into a routine of nightly booze-ups with a coterie of rock star wastrels that included singer-songwriter Harry Nilsson, Who drummer Keith Moon and Ringo Starr. At the same time, Lennon was working at A&M Studios with Phil Spector on an album of Fifties rock and roll classics that would emerge two years later as the *Rock 'n' Roll* album. Lennon had entered into the project to avoid a lawsuit: In his song "Come Together," from the Beatles album *Abbey Road*, Lennon paraphrases a line from Chuck Berry's "You Can't Catch Me." Threatened with legal action by Morris Levy, Berry's music publisher, Lennon cut a deal: he would record an album featuring a few songs to which Levy held copyrights, and Levy would drop the lawsuit, content with the publishing revenue he would receive from sales of a John Lennon album. That was the idea, anyway.

"The sessions could have been absolutely brilliant," Keltner says. "But toward the end of each evening, it would just waste away because of the drinking and the drugs all of us were taking, including Phil. By the end of the night, John would be singing all slow and slurry. 'Just Because' [*the album's closing track*] is a perfect example of that. It started off early in the evening with a really great tempo, great feel, good vocal. And by the time it was done, it was just a real parody of a drunken John Lennon with a bunch of drunk musicians all playing live. I mean at one point, John was singing [*drunken voice*], 'Just because you fuckin' think you're so fuckin' great *agggghhh*...' "

While this particular outtake doesn't appear on the *Lennon Anthology*, the box set does include examples of verbal repartee among Lennon, Spector and the other musicians as they persistently fumble the intro to "Just Because." There's a sad moment when Lennon jokingly predicts he's going to "live to be a 99-year-old-guru." At another point, he's heard to yell, "Keltner, control your prick!" Jim Keltner says he can't remember the remark or its context. Given the quantity of intoxicants being consumed, it's a miracle anybody remembers anything.

"John would buy one of those big gallon bottles of Smirnoff [*vodka*] and bring it to the session," Keltner recalls. "One night I was following him through Hollywood on the way to the studio. May was driving this rent-a-car and John was in the passenger's seat. I was behind them in my Corvette. At a stop sign, I pulled up next to them and he hands me, through the window, this big gallon jug. Man, we could have ended up in jail so easily. It almost broke my arm trying to get the jug into my car. I had to take a big swig out of it so John could see I was keeping up with him. Or trying to keep up with him. I could never go anywhere near the kind of drinking he did. Then we got to the studio and I'd go over and



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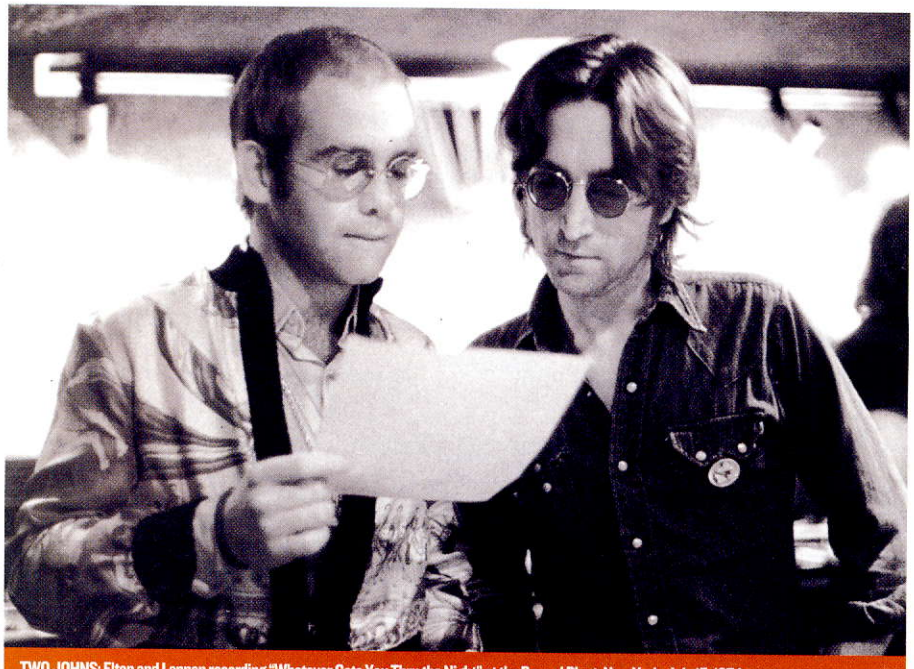
COUNTER REVOLUTIONARY: In a New York diner, March 1975



TWO JOHNS: Elton and Lennon recording "Whatever Gets You Thru the Night" at the Record Plant, New York, July 15, 1974

check the bottle once in a while. And he damn well drank almost half of it. Half a gallon of vodka, man. John could drink. He could really drink enormous amounts of booze. He and Harry [*Nilsson*] were legendary with their drinking."

Keltner was present on the evening of the infamous "Kotex incident," when Lennon walked into the Troubadour, a Los Angeles rock club, wearing a women's sanitary napkin on his head. The evening began, the drummer recollects, "at a restaurant called Lost on Larrabee," Larrabee being a West Hollywood street near the Troubadour. Also present were Lennon's lead guitarist at the time, Jesse Ed Davis, L.A. Record Plant co-owner Gary Kellgren plus various wives and dates. "After we finished eating, we were all pretty drunk," Keltner says. "We went downstairs to the bathrooms. All the guys went in the men's room. Except John—he went in the women's room. You know, just being silly. And he came out with a Kotex stuck to his forehead. All the guys fell out. We thought that was the funniest thing we'd ever seen. The women were all giggling and thinking he was really silly. But then, he didn't take it off. And we were encouraging him to keep it on, like 'Ah, you should walk into the Troubadour like that, man.' We were being really stupid. And he was John Lennon, so nobody stepped in and said, 'No, take that off.' And so we walked into the Troubadour."

The initial elation of alcohol invariably gives way to darker moods, as Keltner observed one evening after a session with Lennon at A&M: "Jesse [*Ed Davis*] was John's partner in crime, only because Jesse was an unmarried guy who loved trouble. He was crazy himself. He would always volunteer to be with John, like, 'I'll take care of him; don't worry,' because, amazingly enough, John didn't have a bodyguard in L.A.—unlike Phil.

"But this one evening Jesse drafted me to help him with John, saying, 'Get in the car with us. You take one side and I'll take the other,' 'cause John was starting to freak out. He was so drunk that he was yelling and screaming at everybody. He was yelling 'Yoko!' at the top of his lungs. Somebody put May in John's lawyer's car. And I was in the back of this Cadillac with John in the middle and Jesse on the other side, and we were trying to hold him down, because he was trying to kick the windows out of the car. He had these big cowboy boots on. John was very strong when he was drunk. He shoved me down to the floor of the car and was pulling my hair and just kicking the windows. He was shoving and hitting Jesse. And the whole time he's yelling at the top of his lungs, 'Yoko! I want Yoko!' And screaming, 'You know who the fuck I am?' He was just out of it completely.

"So we got him to his attorney's apartment, got him inside and sort of calmed him down. I remember leaving and Jesse stayed with him. That night, he completely trashed the man's apartment. There were so many times like that. He trashed [*record producer*] Lou Adler's house. He even uprooted a little palm tree by the front door."

Things eventually got so wild at A&M that Lennon and his crew were kicked out of the studio. Work resumed at the L.A. Record Plant, but the group was soon sent packing. "We got kicked out of the Record Plant because Phil shot his gun off in the canteen," Keltner reports. "He shot his gun at the floor and it ricocheted up into the ceiling. Gary Kellgren and Chris Stone, the studio owners, both decided that was that. We were outta there."

Relations between Spector and Lennon eventually deteriorated, and Spector disappeared with the master tapes. Whenever Lennon had worked with Spector in the past, Yoko had always been present as a third producer. But out in L.A., without her tempering presence, fueled by gallons of Smirnoff and God knows what else, the two rock icons came to a masculine clash of egos.

"I told John it wouldn't work," Ono says. "He said when he was in L.A., 'I think I'm gonna do this thing with Phil.' I said, 'John, I don't think you should do that.' He said, 'Don't worry about it, don't worry.' But I just knew it wasn't going to work. And of course he called me later and said, 'Yeah, you were right—again.' "

Throughout their separation, John and Yoko spoke daily on the phone, sometimes as often as 20 times a day. Although they were physically apart, they continued to be involved in each other's lives. But from 3,000 miles away, even a woman of Yoko Ono's strength and determination couldn't control the events unfolding in L.A. John had to live through it by himself and for himself. One musical artifact on the *Lennon Anthology* sums up this period, and illustrates Keltner's point about how tempos would slow down as the evenings wore on and the musicians got drunker. It's a version of the Ronettes' "Be My Baby," taken at an incredibly sluggish pace. Given the impossibly draggy tempo, Lennon's vocal degenerates into camp histrionics.

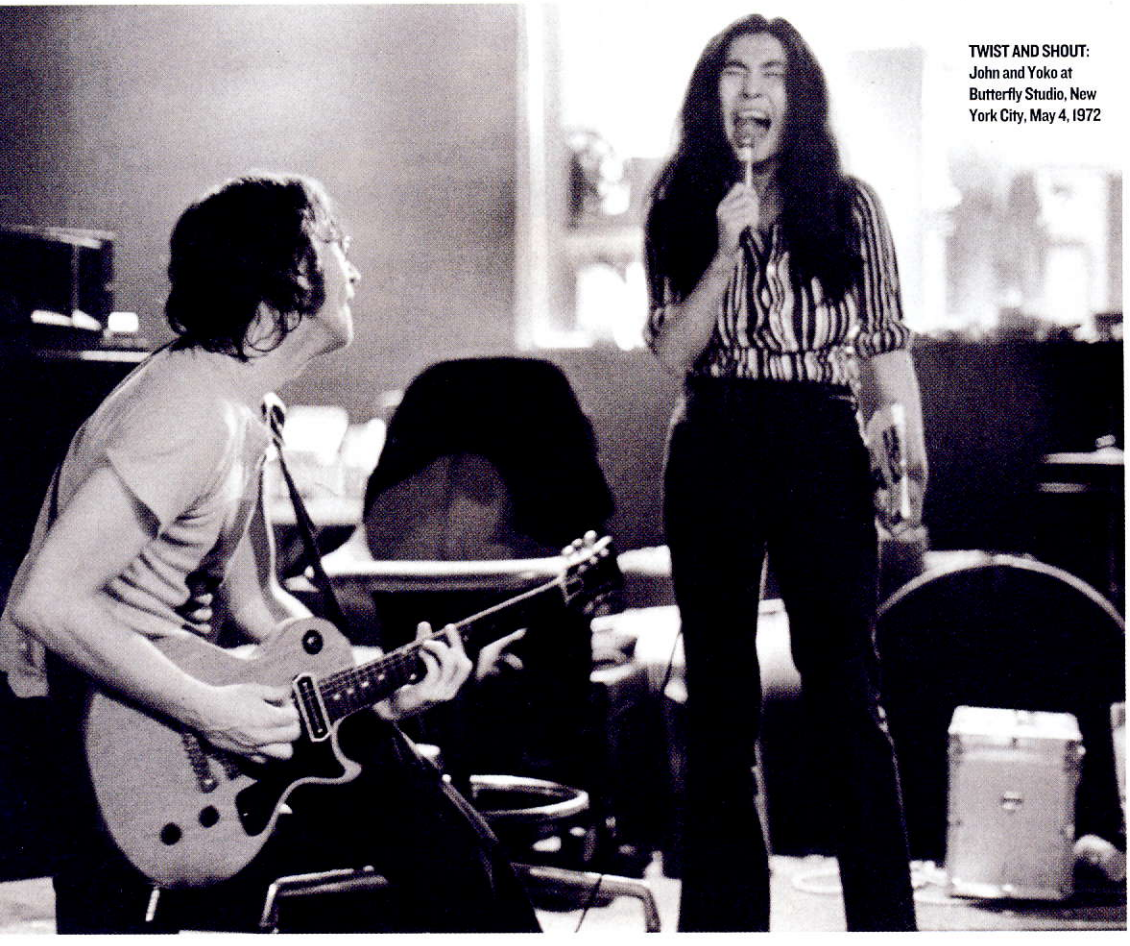
"There's something about his voice that makes me feel so hurtful," Yoko says of the track. "Because you hear his pain. It's so sad. I felt so guilty. But also I know—or maybe I'm just telling myself this—that it could not have been any other way. What can you do? I didn't know it was going to be such a short life."

Lennon eventually got the L.A. tapes back from Spector and finished the album without him, recutting many of the tracks at the Record Plant in New York City. The finished album remained unreleased through 1974, during which time Lennon recorded and released his fourth solo album, *Wall and Bridges*. When finally released as *Rock 'n' Roll* in February 1975, it showed Lennon's considerable prowess as a singer of Fifties rock material. But it is the chaos of his personal life that lends a desperately urgent edge to many of his vocal performances on the disc.

WALLS AND BRIDGES / Still separated from Yoko, Lennon returned to Manhattan in 1974. Settling into an apartment on 52nd Street with May Pang, he began work on what would become the *Walls and Bridges* album. He was far more sober than he had been in L.A. "John had a tremendous sweet tooth," Keltner says. "And—partially in lieu of his drinking, I think—he had this massive bar of Hershey's chocolate that was like three feet across that he kept in the freezer at the studio. It was huge, kind of like the Smirnoff bottle."

Walls and Bridges tracks like "Scared" and "Nobody Loves You (When You're Down and Out)" reflect the bitterness of the Lost Weekend and Lennon's growing disillusionment with the music business. The title of the album's major hit, "Whatever Gets You Thru the Night," is drawn from an Alcoholics Anonymous slogan. An

BOB GRUEN



TWIST AND SHOUT: John and Yoko at Butterfly Studio, New York City, May 4, 1972

BOB GRUEN

early take of the song appears on the *Lennon Anthology*: competent but lackluster, the performance offers hardly any hint of the song's potential. That all changed when Lennon's friend Elton John came into the studio to sing and play piano on the track. "Nobody plays piano with that kind of abandon," says Jim Keltner. "Not back then they didn't, anyway. So Elton just brought his energy and made that song come alive."

"Whatever Gets You Thru the Night" was also the song that brought John and Yoko back together. Elton bet Lennon that the song would reach Number One and made Lennon promise to make a guest appearance at one of John's concerts when it did. As it happened, the song went to the top of the charts, giving Lennon his first solo Number One record. He honored his commitment on Thanksgiving evening, 1974, by joining Elton onstage at New York's Madison Square Garden to perform a few songs. Yoko had been persuaded to attend the concert, and when the couple met up backstage, they decided it was time to live together again.

Reunited, they embarked on a new domestic regimen, cutting out alcohol and drugs and going on a strict macrobiotic diet. They also attempted to have a child. Their previous attempts had been in vain and resulted in at least one miscarriage, but at long last they were successful. On October 9, 1975, Sean Taro Ono Lennon was born.

With a child to raise, Lennon decided to take a sabbatical from the music business. He devoted the next five years to raising his son and playing the role of "househusband" at the Dakota while Yoko attended to the couple's financial interests in the downstairs office, amassing a considerable fortune in real estate and "environment friendly" investments.

Although he was out of the public eye, Lennon's creativity continued to find outlets, albeit domestic ones. The *Lennon Anthology* contains an intriguing cache of little comic songs and vignettes that John created on his two cassette decks during this time. "He was amusing himself," says Yoko. "But he was also kind of proud that he had a knack for doing that sort of thing. And also he needed an audience, which I was. We were both in this luxury prison here, comparing notes. And even when I wasn't there, he'd be recording things. I'd be downstairs doing the business, and when I came upstairs he'd say, 'Listen to this!' "

A large project that occupied Lennon during these years was the planning of a stage musical. "John was constantly getting involved in new media," says Yoko. "So he said, 'How about a musical?' And the title was *The Ballad of John and Yoko*. So predictable." She laughs. "He had ideas like, 'The first scene should be like this, and the second scene like that.' He wrote some of the songs first. 'Real Love' was going to be the scene where we first meet. Just really corny stuff, you know? [*In 1994, the three surviving Beatles overdubbed onto Lennon's home demo of "Real Love" and released the completed track on* The Beatles Anthology. *Lennon's demo appears in its original form on* John Lennon Anthology.] And I wrote 'Every Man Has a Woman Who Loves Him' for the musical. There were a few that I wrote for it and a few that he wrote. I think that some of them went into *Double Fantasy* [*1980*] and *Milk and Honey* [*1984*]."

DOUBLE FANTASY / While vacationing in Bermuda in 1980, Lennon began writing songs at a fast pace. After a five-year break from his career, he decided it was time to start recording again. A plan was devised for making an album that combined songs written by John with a more or less equal number penned by Yoko. The title for this work, *Double Fantasy*, was taken from the name of a hybrid flower John saw in Bermuda.

For their coproducer, the couple chose rock vet Jack Douglas (Aerosmith, Cheap Trick) who had first worked with John Lennon as an assistant engineer on *Imagine*. "John made the *Double Fantasy* project easy," Douglas says. He sent me these incredible demos that he had recorded in Bermuda by bouncing between two Panasonic boom boxes. He told me to do arrangements for the songs. His demo for 'Watching the Wheels' [*included in the* Lennon Anthology *box*] was a Dylan type of thing. He wrote me a note from Bermuda saying, 'Can you make it more circular?' So the first thing I did in arranging it was slow it down. And I added a hammer dulcimer, to give it a more circular feel."

Douglas and Tony Davilio prepared charts from Lennon's song demos, and Douglas contracted a group of top New York session players including guitarists Hugh McCracken and Earl Slick, and bassist Tony Levin. There was one catch: During rehearsals, the players were not allowed to know who the artist was. "I said to them, 'I can't tell you,' " Douglas recollects. "But some of the guys guessed after a few days. All the rehearsals were done with me and the band alone. The deal was we were gonna make this record, but nobody was going to know about it. John was insecure about how the whole thing

Showing Sean around the Hit Factory, New York City, August 1980

was going to work out, having been away so long. So I took the charts to the rehearsal hall. I sang the songs and the guys played the charts. For the last rehearsal, the address I gave them was the Dakota. That was the first official time that they knew who the album was for."

The initial meeting between Lennon and the musicians went well, Douglas recalls: "We ran through all the songs. And as we were leaving John suddenly said, 'Stop. Wait one minute, Jack. I've got one more tune. I just wrote it.' There was a Fender Rhodes piano parked right by the entrance to the apartment. John sat down at it and played 'Just Like Starting Over.' The next day, we went in the studio and began by recording 'Starting Over.' Instead of going right to charts, I thought it would be a good way to get the chemistry going between John and the whole rest of the band. We worked it up pretty fast."

Hugh McCracken has the distinction of having played guitar with all four former Beatles. "John was really spontaneous and quick," is how McCracken characterizes Lennon. "[Double Fantasy] was the first time I remember working with an artist who was ahead of the engineer. The engineer is always ready to roll tape, especially on a project like that, but a lot of times John would be ready to roll and nobody else would. Keeping up with John was a task—a delightful one."

At first, the recording sessions for *Double Fantasy* were top secret. "I deliberately picked the old Hit Factory [*recording studio*] on 48th Street," says Douglas. "It was way out west between 9th and 10th avenues. I figured we could get in and out of that studio without anyone noticing us. The deal was, if anybody told anybody what was happening, the project would simply stop. After a month of working, John said, 'You know what? This is good. Let's let everybody know what's happening.' "

As the project evolved, Douglas and Davilio's original charts were tightened and modified. McCracken recalls going over to the Dakota several times for informal arrangement sessions with Lennon, Douglas and keyboardist George Small. "A lot of ideas came out of that. I'd play something and John would say, 'That thing.' 'What thing?' 'That thing you just played. Yeah, that.' And I would jot it down. As a guitarist, John was very free. He wasn't the kind of guitarist who had a library of licks. But he was very creative."

Life in the studio with the Lennons was very much an extension of their lives at the Dakota. "While we were doing *Double Fantasy* in the studio, of course Sean would be there all the time," Yoko says. "When John first went in the studio, he put Sean's picture up on the TV screen over the mixing board. That's how things were gonna be."

All the musicians and other people involved in the project had to turn in their birth dates, in order to be cleared by one of the Lennons' astrologers, according to Jack Douglas. "No one was rejected," he adds. Drugs and alcohol were banned from the studio. Sushi and macrobiotic food were catered in. "But the pizza and cheeseburgers were in the maintenance shop," Douglas says, and winks. "It used to be that guys would go off and smoke a joint. In this case, all the junk food was delivered to maintenance. John would say, 'I have to go to the bathroom.' And you'd see him running into the maintenance room and there'd be a slice of pizza in there, or a cheeseburger with everything on it. I mean, man does not live by sushi alone."

The mood in the studio was apparently upbeat. "I could bring a session to a halt in a second," McCracken says, "if I played some old rock and roll song from the Fifties. John and I were the same age and both grew up on that stuff. So no matter what we were doing, John couldn't resist playing some old song like that, whether it was Chuck Berry or Buddy Holly or whatever."

At one point, Douglas brought the members of Cheap Trick into the studio to cut some tracks. The producer had worked with the influential power pop band on their first two albums. "I thought it was a perfect marriage," he says. "They were deeply influenced by John's music and could lend a kind of contemporary feel to the album." Cheap Trick guitarist Rick Nielsen, bassist Tom Petersson and drummer Bun E. Carlos cut two tracks for *Double Fantasy*: Yoko's "I'm Moving On" and John's "I'm Losing You." The latter track is included in the *Lennon Anthology*, a

BOB GRUEN [BOTH]

rough-and-ready reading of the tune that rocks considerably harder than the version on the album.

It was Ono, according to Douglas, who vetoed the idea of using the Cheap Trick tracks. "She thought they were just some band I was trying to give a boost to," says the producer, "even though they'd been quite successful and were in the process of making an album with George Martin, ironically enough. But John was not one for arguing with 'Mother' [*Lennon's affectionate name for Ono*]. So we just played the Cheap Trick version into the headphones for Hugh and Tony and the guys. And that's how we got it."

All told, the sessions went on for four or five months, by the end of which time Lennon, Ono, Douglas and the band had not only completed *Double Fantasy* but also cut several tracks for an additional album. These included the hits "Nobody Told Me" and "Stepping Out." As it turned out, these songs were first heard under far sadder circumstances than anyone intended—after John Lennon's death, on the posthumous *Milk and Honey* album.

Lennon spent the last day of his life in the recording studio, with Yoko and Jack Douglas. December 8, 1980, is a day that Douglas will never forget: "We were at the Record Plant, doing 'Walking on Thin Ice.' And we were going to meet the next day to master it at Sterling [*mastering lab*]. John wasn't even supposed to be in New York. He was supposed to be in Bermuda. So I'd booked another session. John called me up and I said, 'I thought you were in Bermuda.' He said, 'No, I'm not staying away. I'm on a roll now. Let's go in and finish that track of Yoko's, "Walking on Thin Ice." That track can be so brilliant. That's gonna be the one where the critics are finally gonna say, 'Yoko, we didn't take you seriously enough.' "

The Lennons and Douglas had spent about two weeks before that building up the track by overdubbing onto an eight-bar tape loop. "So I told John, 'Okay,' " Douglas recalls. "And he had me move my previously booked session to later at night, like a nine P.M. starting time. So I started working with John and Yoko at about one or two in the afternoon—just the three of us in the control room. John and I played instruments. Sometimes we both played the same instrument. We had an absolute blast. Yoko laid this beautiful poem over it and we finished the track.

"Normally, I used to ride home with John every night after we finished up in the studio. I live three blocks from the Dakota, on Central Park West. But that night I was going to another session. So I just said good night to him. He got on the elevator and said, 'I'll see you at nine A.M. tomorrow.' I said, 'Okay, I'll see you there.' John had a big smile on his face. We were so happy with the track. David Geffen had been by that day. He was thrilled. The record was going well. It was just a big up. It ended on a big up."

In the studio in 1972

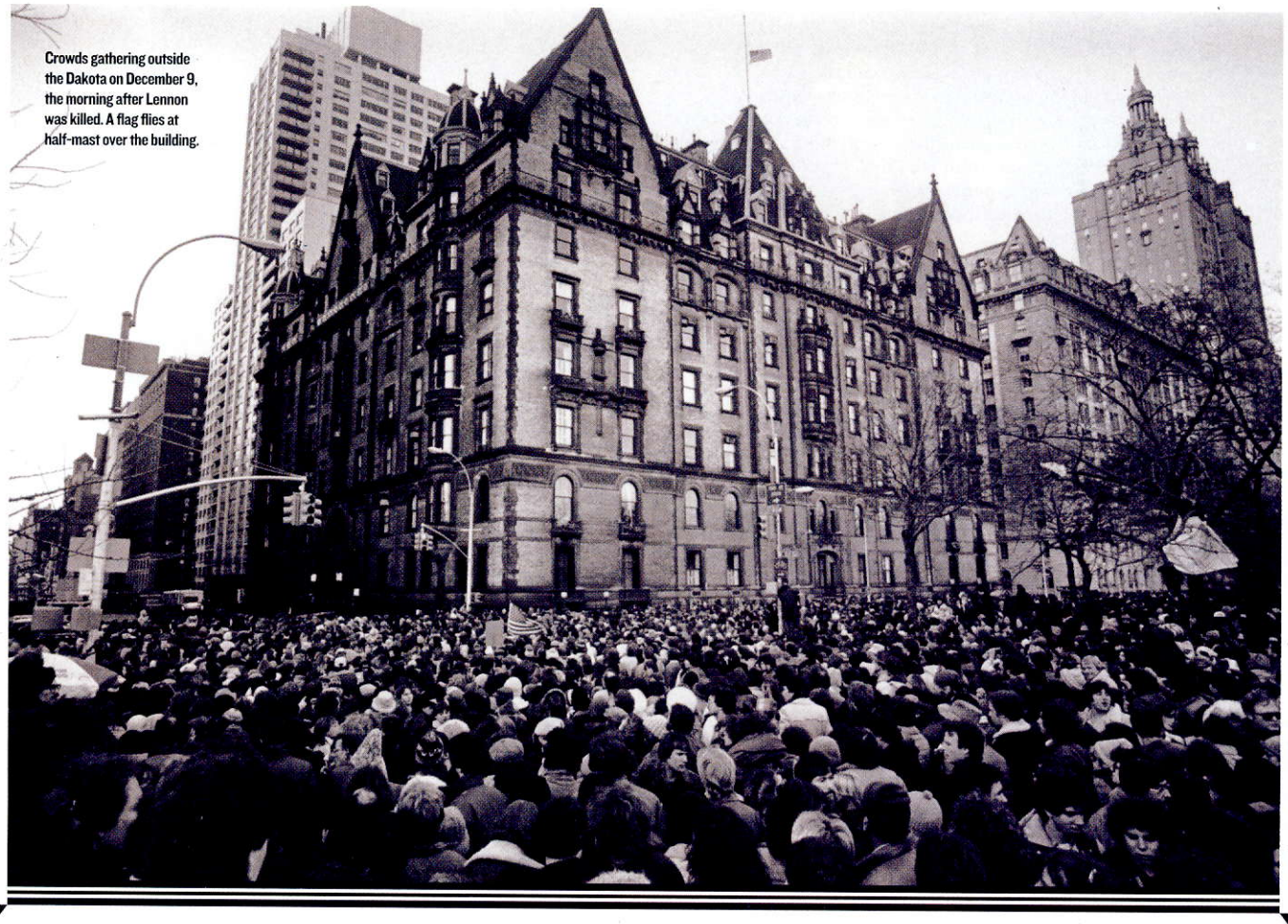
Forty-five minutes later, Douglas' wife came running into the studio where her husband was working. She'd been out strolling on the Upper West Side and heard a commotion. John Lennon had been fatally shot in front of the Dakota.

"I wonder quite often whether John might have known he was going," Yoko Ono says. "Because there was that 'Watching the Wheels' kind of resignation in a lot of his work at the end. Although he did have plans, obviously. He was saying, 'Let's go on tour.' He had tons of ideas in the sense of moving on and doing new things. Still doing music, but in new ways."

There were plans for Lennon to do an album with Ringo Starr, according to Jack Douglas. And many of the musicians who played on *Double Fantasy* had already committed to touring with Lennon, who had begun to do drawings of stage sets. "He was even planning to do new versions of 'She Loves You' and 'I Want to Hold Your Hand'," Jack Douglas says. "He'd already played them for us. His new renditions of those songs exist somewhere, because I recorded everything that went on in those rooms."

While many of John Lennon's solo recordings did not have the massive and instantaneous cultural impact of the Beatles' records, Yoko Ono feels that, ultimately, Lennon's individual achievements outshine those of his former band:

"The Beatles definitely did change society in the latter half of the 20th century. But I think John really went a step further in communicating how to change. Not just having fun, you know? In the Sixties, people learned that loosening up, having fun and being nice to each other is better than being morally strict with each other like in the Fifties. The Sixties were definitely brought on by the Beatles, in a way. And I think they were great. But John was giving some kind of directional communication that further changed our lives—in the sense that men started to feel it was all right to be vulnerable and cry. And of course feminism was greatly helped by John: the househusband thing. It's kind of normal now for husbands to have more interest in the family. And 'Imagine,' as you know, is now a worldwide anthem. So I think there's a lot that John did single handedly." ❖



Crowds gathering outside the Dakota on December 9, the morning after Lennon was killed. A flag flies at half-mast over the building.

DECEMBER 8, 1980, 11:15 P.M.

Dr. Frank Veteran recalls the tragic struggle to save John Lennon's life.

BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, Frank Veteran was a chief resident in surgery at Roosevelt Hospital on New York City's west side. At 30 years old, he was in his fifth and final year of surgical training. Between the pressures of medical school and his job, he'd had little time to keep up with current events, let alone the comings and goings of his childhood heroes.

"I was into the Beatles, and I followed them," says Veteran. "But by the time I was the chief resident in surgery, I wasn't listening to them anymore. I was too busy. I didn't even realize John Lennon was living in New York."

One of three chief residents at Roosevelt, Veteran was on call for emergencies every third night. There, he attended to the routine injuries of city life: "Gunshot wounds, stab wounds. You wouldn't have to be in the hospital all the time, but if anything happened, you'd have to come in and take one of the younger residents through the procedure. When you were chief resident, you were the primary head doctor. You ran the whole show."

On the night of December 8, 1980, the show was unlike any Veteran had seen before.

He'd spent the evening at his girlfriend's apartment, on 10th Avenue, across from the hospital. Around 11 o'clock, as they were getting ready for bed, his beeper went off. "They said, 'We have a gunshot wound to the chest.' I asked, 'What's the status of the patient?' They said, 'Well, Dr. Halloran'—one of the younger residents—'is opening his chest.' I said, 'Well, if Halloran is opening his chest, you don't need me.' " Opening the patient's chest, Veteran explains, is a last resort, performed when the heart has stopped and the patient is unlikely to live. "But they said to me, 'No, we need you now!' "

Puzzled by the call, Veteran dressed quickly, took the elevator down to the lobby and ran across 10th Avenue to the hospital. As he walked upstairs and down the hall to the emergency room, he encountered a pair of nurses. "One of them looked at me and said, 'John Lennon.' I looked at them and thought, What does John Lennon have to do with it? It made no sense to me. It was so ridiculous that it didn't even register."

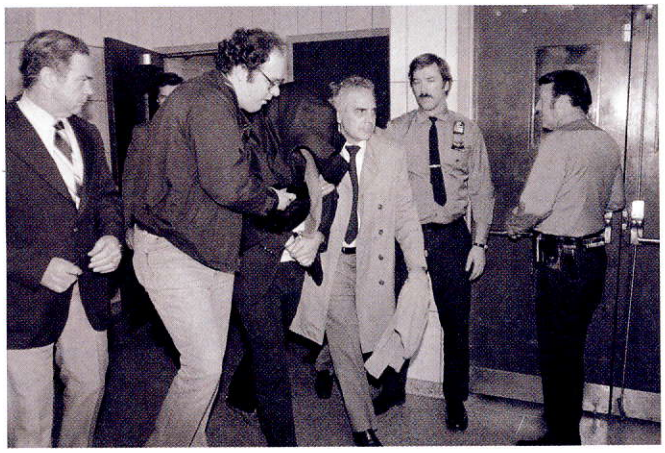
As Veteran entered the ER, the significance of the nurse's remark became vividly clear. "I walked in, and there was John Lennon, on the table, with all these people around him." Just minutes earlier, Lennon had been shot while returning with his wife, Yoko Ono, to their home at the Dakota, a luxury apartment building on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Bleeding heavily, his vital signs quickly ebbing, Lennon had been sped to the hospital by officers who had responded to the shooting.

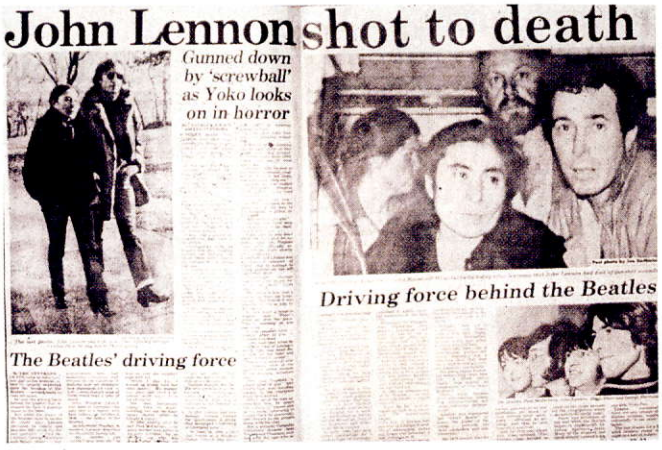
"Standing there, suddenly, everything just hit me," says Veteran. "For some reason, I thought of John Kennedy and Jesus Christ. It was just a weird thing that flashed in my head."

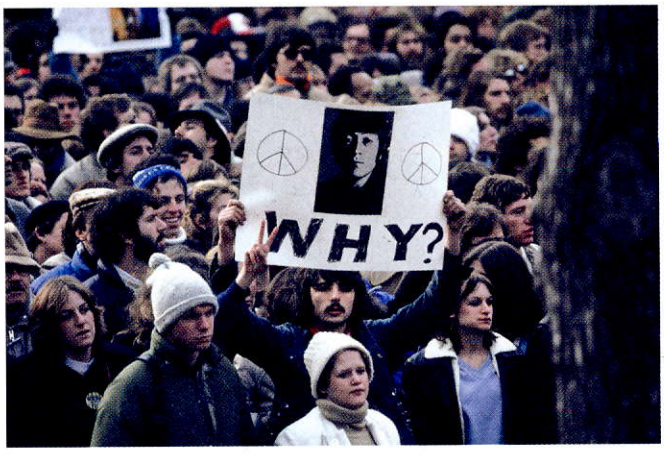
The doctors had already begun trying to resuscitate Lennon. "His chest was open,"

KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

"STANDING THERE, SUDDENLY, EVERYTHING JUST HIT ME. FOR SOME REASON, *I THOUGHT OF JOHN KENNEDY AND JESUS CHRIST.* IT WAS JUST A WEIRD THING THAT FLASHED IN MY HEAD."







(clockwise from top left) Chapman is escorted out of a Manhattan police station early on December 9; the .357 magnum used to kill Lennon; fans mourn in New York City; the *New York Post* on the morning after the shooting

Veteran says. "They were doing everything to save him."

He stepped up to the surgery table and took a grim assessment of the patient. Lennon had been shot four times from the left at point-blank range with a .357 magnum revolver. Two bullets had passed through his left upper arm and entered his chest; two more entered his chest just behind the arm. Traveling through his torso, they ripped through his lungs and arteries. Three of the bullets exited the front of his chest: one under his left clavicle and two on the left side of his sternum. The fourth remained lodged inside his body.

According to Veteran, the worst injury was to Lennon's subclavian artery, a major branch of the aorta, the heart's main artery: "He was bleeding heavily." For 20 minutes, Veteran and his associates worked to get Lennon's heart beating again. "Once your heart stops, you have five minutes, basically, to resuscitate it before lack of oxygen causes brain injury," says Veteran. "So how long does it take to get from the Dakota to Roosevelt Hospital, get into the emergency room, get stripped, get your chest opened? Well, it takes longer than five minutes." Lennon's heart never beat again. "And had we gotten it going, he would have been brain dead. It would have been a disaster anyway."

Veteran recalls a conversation he had with an officer on the scene at the Dakotas. "He said the last evidence of any life was a groan when they put him in the backseat of the police cruiser."

At 11:15 p.m., Lennon was pronounced dead. Chief medical examiner Dr. Elliott M. Gross said after the autopsy that Lennon died of shock and blood loss and that no one could have survived more than a few minutes with such injuries.

Veteran was still in surgery attending to Lennon's body when he heard a scream from a nearby room. "That was Yoko Ono," he says. "The head of the emergency room had given her the news. It was a horrendous scream."

For months afterward, Veteran suffered from depression. "I'd feel normal, and then I'd wake up in the middle of the night in this deep depression. It took six months for that to go away." During his tenure at Roosevelt, Veteran estimates that he attended to as many as four gunshot or stab wounds each night. "I was used to it. I didn't feel freaked out. But something deep down affected me that night."

By the next year, he was a practicing plastic surgeon. Today, at 55, Veteran has left the medical profession and is a Wall Street investor. But physically and psychically, the events of December 8, 1980, have never left him.

"I was a kid when Kennedy was assassinated," says Veteran, "and I remember watching [*Lee Harvey*] Oswald"—Kennedy's alleged assassin—"get killed on live TV." Just three months later, he recalls tuning in again to witness another transforming moment in American history: the Beatles' American TV debut on the Ed Sullivan Show. "I was a big Beatles fan. How couldn't you be?

"It's funny but, when someone you idolize dies, you take it very personally and feel attached to them in some way, even though you aren't. People like Kennedy and Lennon become bigger in life. And tragic death elevates them even higher." ❖

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: BETTMANN/CORBIS; ZUMA PRESS; HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; LONDON FEATURES

Harrison in 1966

THE QUIET STORM

He was the soft-spoken *lead guitarist for the Beatles, the world's greatest rock group. But George Harrison's playing shook up the world and helped create guitar rock and roll.*

BY CHRISTOPHER SCAPELLITI

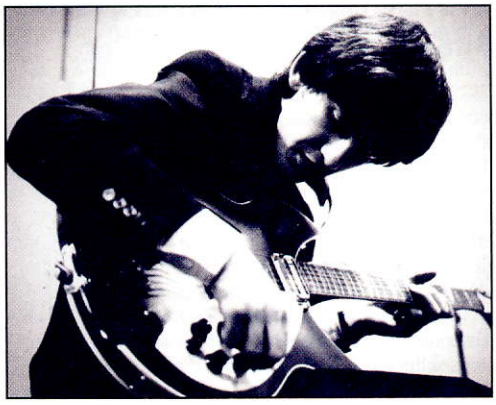
TO THE MILLIONS WHO grew up on his music, he was the Quiet Beatle. To the Hamburg teens that in the early Sixties witnessed the Beatles' evolution from crude protopunks to polished professional rock stars, he was the Beautiful One.

But as far as George Harrison was concerned, he could be best described by the name he chose for his record label in the late Seventies: the Dark Horse—the straggler who vaults from behind to win the race.

The choice of title was ironic for Harrison, the Beatles' former lead guitarist. Of the group's four members, he was the one most disinterested in the spoils of stardom, the loner less concerned with winning the race than running it on his own terms. For those who watched as he abandoned the spotlight for a more domestic lifestyle in the Eighties and Nineties, it was hard to know what to make of Harrison; normality, after all, was not what we'd come to expect from a member of the Fab Four, the group that rose out of Liverpool, England, to conquer our senses. Beatles were supposed to be larger than life, yet iconic enough to be describable within a space the size of a postage stamp: guitarist John Lennon was the outspoken radical, bassist Paul McCartney the eager-to-please prodigy and drummer Ringo Starr the happy-go-lucky luminary. Harrison, on the other hand, defied easy definition.

As he noted in 1989, long after his career had passed its zenith, "I don't have to prove anything. I don't want to be in the business full-time, because I'm a gardener: I plant flowers and watch them grow."

He was a lead guitarist first, of course, an ace practitioner of R&B and rockabilly riffs who became the master of his own singularly fluid guitar tone. In this alone he was essential to the Fab Four's success, since neither Lennon nor McCartney possessed his talent on the instrument. More consequential, Harrison's skills as a lead guitarist are what elevated the Beatles from a rhythm-based pop act to a guitar rock group, and it was in this form that they changed popular music permanently: Before the Beatles, no group wrote and performed its own material. After them, no self-respecting band would not.



It was easy to overlook his significance, for he made no show of it. The youngest of the Beatles, he was in the group's early days its most humble member, a young man unguardedly insecure of his talents, who would greet reporters' questions with self-mockery and a large dose of laconic Liverpudlian charisma. When in 1964 he and his shaggy bandmates were asked at their first U.S. press conference when they planned to get haircuts, it was Harrison who impishly replied, "I had one yesterday."

Some six years later, when the Beatles broke up, how those charms seemed to fade. As ex-Fabs go, Harrison seemed the loneliest, a hermit lodged in his mock-Gothic English mansion and hiding behind a mane of hair and squire's beard. No longer required to beguile and amuse, Harrison seemed eager to be taken seriously, and he gave the world good reason to do so. As a solo artist he released what many regard as the best solo Beatles album, 1970's *All Things Must Pass*, and launched a benefit show the following year to help war-ravaged Bangladesh, thus laying the foundation for Live Aid, Farm Aid, Concert for New York City and every other music-oriented charity event since.

In the Eighties and onward, when Harrison's albums came more slowly and his life appeared more monkish, it was hard to remember

OPPOSITE: BOB WHITTAKER/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA LTD; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Warming up with Lennon before a performance in 1964

he was there at all. Having renounced the fame that bloomed from his diligence and talent, Harrison followed a path of solitude few celebrated artists dare to tread. No wonder he remained an enigma to so many, not least his former bandmate John Lennon, who once remarked, "George himself is no mystery. But the mystery of George inside is immense."

To George Harrison, however, those who questioned the complexity of his choices were simply missing the point. "It's good to boogie once in a while," he remarked a few years into his post-Beatles career. "But when you boogie all your life away, it's just a waste of a life and of what we've been given."

GEORGE HARRISON was born on February 25, 1943, at 12 Arnold Grove, in Liverpool, to Harold and Louise Harrison. The youngest of four children, he was a favorite, doted on by both his mother and siblings, and a source of constant concern to his practical-minded father. Even at a young age, Harrison demonstrated the self-reliant disposition for which he would later become famously known. "George was always very independent," his mother recalled. "He never wanted any assistance of any kind."

> **"GEORGE IS NO MYSTERY. BUT *THE MYSTERY OF GEORGE* INSIDE IS IMMENSE."** — *JOHN LENNON*

Early on, his independence turned to outright rebellion. In 1954, at age 11, he began attending the Liverpool Institute, and although a good student, he resisted the school's attempts to mold him and his mates into model citizens. "I hated being dictated to," he said. "That's when things go wrong, when you're quietly growing up and they start trying to force being part of society down your throat. I was just trying to be myself. They were trying to turn everybody into rows of little toffees."

Harrison rebelled not only by shirking on his schoolwork; he also began to dress outlandishly and to grow his hair out. "George used to go to school with his school cap sitting high on top of his hair," his mother recalled. "And very tight trousers."

"Going in for flash clothes was part of the rebelling," he explained. "I don't know what made me do it, but it worked. They didn't get me."

It was a good time to be a rebel. Rock and roll was on the horizon, and Harrison was already beginning to develop an interest in music through his father's record collection, where he discovered American country artists like Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams. "Waiting for a Train" was one of his favorites. "That led me to the guitar," he said.

Harrison received his first instrument—an Egmond acoustic purchased from a fellow student—at the age of 13. As he recalled, "It was a real cheapo horrible little guitar, but it was okay at the time." Harrison received lessons from one of his father's friends for a few hours every Thursday night. Though his skill on the instrument came slowly and with difficulty, he kept at it, sometimes practicing "till his fingers were bleeding," according to his mother.

He eventually got a proper guitar, a Hofner President, with *f*-holes, that was based on the big Super Gibson guitars. "I would sit around for hours, playing and trying to figure things out. I used to sit up late at night. I didn't look on it as practicing, more learning. It was the only thing I really liked."

By 1957, rock music had arrived in England through the records of Elvis Presley, Fats Domino, Little Richard and Buddy Holly. Simultaneously, Great Britain's teens were under the spell of skiffle, a British form of fast country-western folk music played on acoustic guitar, washboard and string bass. The undisputed king of the genre was Lonnie Donegan, a Scottish guitarist whose version of "Rock Island Line" was known to every teenager from Brighton to Aberdeen. "I loved him," recalled Harrison. "He was a big hero of mine. Everyone got guitars and formed skiffle bands because of him."

Among those caught up in the craze was a boy on Harrison's school bus. Paul McCartney was a grade ahead of Harrison, but the two had known each other casually since Harrison's arrival at the Institute. When skiffle hit, their shared interest in the guitar brought them closer together. "Paul came round to my house one evening to look at the guitar manual I had, which I could never work out," said Harrison. "We learned a couple of chords from it and managed to play 'Don't You Rock Me Daddy O' with two chords."

By now, Harrison was good enough to sit in occasionally with local bands. McCartney, however, had actually joined a group. The previous summer, in 1956, he'd attended a fair at Woolton Parish Church, where he saw a skiffle act called the Quarry Men. The band wasn't so good, but the group's leader impressed McCartney enough that he decided to make his acquaintance.

CURT GUNTHER/LFI

"It was John," McCartney recalled. "He was 16 and I was only 14, so he was a big man. I showed him a few more chords he didn't know. Then I left. I felt I'd made an impression, shown them how good I was."

Figuring that McCartney was as good a guitarist as he was, Lennon invited him to join the Quarry Men. Though McCartney showed talent on the instrument, his skills were limited. During one early performance, while attempting a solo on "Twenty Flight Rock," he froze. It was his first and, for many years, last attempt to play lead guitar.

Harrison had no such difficulties. Though only 14 years old, he'd begun to develop lead guitar skills by copying the guitar riffs from records of the day. At McCartney's invitation, he attended a Quarry Men performance in 1958.

"There was this other guitarist in another group that night," Harrison recalled. "He was great. John said if I could play like that, I could join them. I played 'Raunchy' [*a 1957 instrumental hit*] for them, and John said I could join. I was always playing 'Raunchy' for them. We'd be going somewhere on the top of a bus with our guitars and John would shout out, 'Give us 'Raunchy,' George.' "

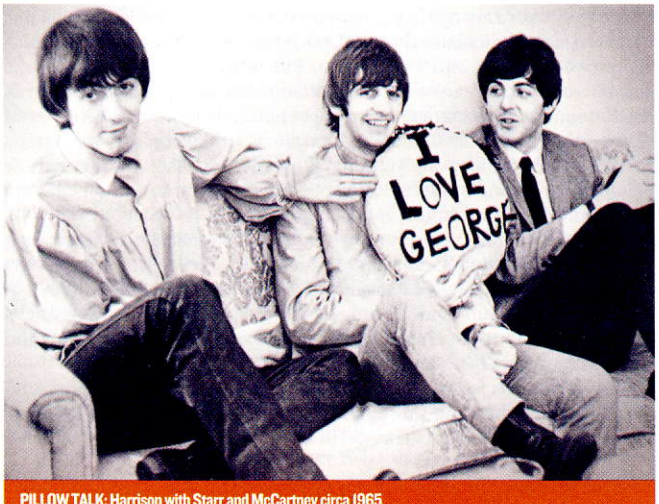
Nearly three years Harrison's senior, Lennon was slow to accept him into the group. "George was just too young," he recalled. "I didn't want to know him at first." But Lennon was impressed by his talent and saw the potential for the Quarry Men to develop into a stronger group. It probably helped that Harrison taught Lennon some guitar rudiments he severely lacked. "His guitar was cheap, with a little round sound hole," Harrison recalled. "It only had four strings. John didn't even know that guitars should have six strings. He was playing banjo chords, big extended finger chords. I said, 'What are you doing?' He thought that that was how it should be. So we showed him some proper chords—E and A, and all those—and got him to put six strings on his guitar."

Said Lennon, "George wanted to join us because he knew more chords, a lot more than we knew. So we got a lot from him."

BUT ALL OF HARRISON'S hours of practice could not compare with the experience he and his bandmates would get playing in the German seaport of Hamburg. By 1960, the skiffle boom had given way to the beat music of American rock groups, and the Beatles—as Harrison, Lennon and McCartney were now known—were among Liverpool's top rock and roll acts. With Lennon's Liverpool Art College friend Stu Sutcliffe on bass and Harrison's friend Pete Best on drums, the group was holding down regular gigs at the Cavern, a Liverpool jazz club that had begun opening its doors to rock acts as beat music grew in popularity. Through a local nightclub owner named Alan Williams, they were invited to play in Hamburg, a town infamous for its rowdy nightlife.

"Before we played Hamburg in 1960 we were very ropy—just keen young kids," Harrison told *Guitar World* in 1997. "As a band, we weren't a unit; we didn't have a clue." Hamburg changed everything for the group. Shoved onto a stage at the Indra and, later, the Kaiserkeller—two of the strip's lower-tier clubs—the five innocents from Liverpool played grueling 10-hour sets. The hard work not only fused the group's sound; it also honed Harrison's guitar-playing skills.

By now playing a solidbody Czech-made Futurama, the youngest Beatle was beginning to develop his own style based on the double-stop leads



PILLOW TALK: Harrison with Starr and McCartney circa 1965

Backstage before a gig in London's East Ham, in 1963

of Chuck Berry and the countrified licks he'd learned from his favorite guitarist, Carl Perkins. As one of the main artists on the legendary Sun Records label, Perkins had made an impression on Harrison, as well as Lennon and McCartney, with his rapid-fire leads. What's more, Perkins wrote and performed his own material—songs like "Honey Don't" and "Everybody's Trying to be My Baby," and, not least, the rockabilly anthem popularized by fellow Sun artist Elvis Presley, "Blue Suede Shoes."

"Carl Perkins and 'Blue Suede Shoes'—they don't come more perfect than that," said Harrison.

PERKINS' GUITAR-PLAYING STYLE influenced Harrison's playing on much of the Beatles' early recordings. By the time the Beatles—now a four-piece with McCartney on bass and Ringo Starr on drums—had become international celebrities, Harrison's clean and sinuous lead guitar work was helping to forge the new sound of guitar rock.

But while Harrison was celebrated for his playing, songwriting was—and for years remained—his weak suit. Lennon and McCartney had been writing songs practically from the day they met, but Harrison didn't begin to develop his songwriting talent until after the Beatles' first album, *Please Please Me*. His first effort produced "Don't Bother Me," the minor-key song that appeared on the group's second album, *With the Beatles*, in 1963. "I decided to write a song, just for a laugh," he explained. "I got out my guitar and just played around till a song came. It was a fairly crappy song."

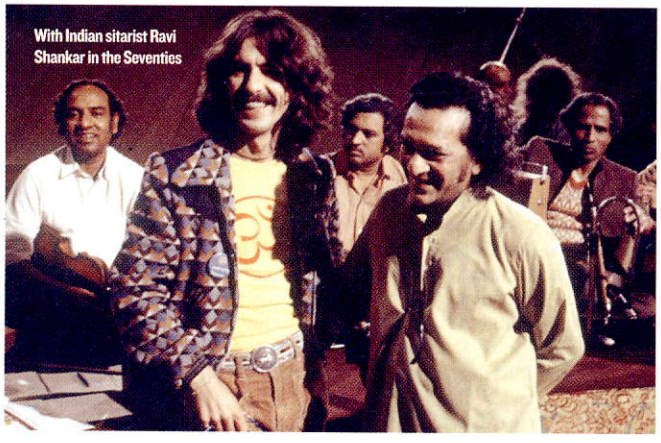
Though his assessment was unduly harsh, it may account for why it was nearly two years before Harrison attempted to write again. When he did, the results were more often than not refreshingly original. "Think for Yourself" and "If I Needed Someone," both from 1965's *Rubber Soul*, have a melodic angularity that's missing from McCartney's lilting melodies and Lennon's harmonically dissonant vocal style. Likewise, "Taxman," the lead track on 1966's *Revolver*, is written with a stingingly personal malevolence previously absent from the Beatles' catalog.

Harrison could also demonstrate striking melodic invention, as he did in the *Revolver* track "I Want to Tell You." The song's disturbing sentiment is neatly underscored by a jarring chord that appears near the end of each verse. Though dissonance is common in today's rock and metal music, it was practically unheard of in popular music prior to "I Want to Tell You."

"That's an E7th with an F on the top, played on the piano," Harrison explained to *Guitar World* in 2001. "I'm really proud of that, because I literally invented that chord. The song was about the frustration we all feel about trying to communicate certain things with just words. I realized

ABOVE: JANE BROWN/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA LTD; BELOW: EXPRESS/GETTY IMAGES

Onstage with Bob Dylan at the Concert for Bangladesh, Madison Square Garden, August 1, 1971



With Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar in the Seventies

the chords I knew at the time just didn't capture that feeling. So after I got the guitar riff, I experimented until I came up with this dissonant chord that really echoed that frustration."

Such fastidiousness was echoed in his contribution to another *Revolver* track, John Lennon's "I'm Only Sleeping." Using his guitar to mirror the song's dreamy, hallucinogenic theme, Harrison composed his solo for the song, learned to play its notes in reverse order and recorded it onto the track with the tape running in reverse. What's more, he did it twice—once with a clean tone, once with distortion—then combined the two takes into one eerie track of ghostly swelling notes.

It's not coincidental that Harrison's growing musical expression occurred within the same period that he began taking drugs. Pot and LSD were to have a profound effect on him, as it did on the other Beatles, drawing him deeper into his psyche, away from the pervasive glare of stardom.

"Around the time of *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, I became more...conscious," Harrison recalled in 1997. "Everything we were doing became deeper and more meaningful. All the music started happening for me when I started smoking reefers. I've come out the other end of that now and I don't do it. Instead, you learn to get your own cosmic lightning conductor, and nature supports you. You begin to realize that you are very small, and yet everyone and every grain of sand is very important. You listen deeper, somehow."

IT WAS IN THIS FRAME OF MIND that Harrison, in 1965, found himself drawn to Indian music and the spiritual philosophy behind it, a fascination that culminated in 1968 with the Beatles trip to India, where they studied for several weeks under Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the spiritual leader behind Transcendental Meditation. Harrison's interest in Indian music grew after Lennon asked him to add some sitar to his 1965 song "Norwegian Wood."

"Norwegian Wood' was the first use of sitar on one of our records," said Harrison, who recalled that "during the filming of *Help!* there were some Indian musicians in a restaurant scene and I first messed around with one then."

The impact on pop music was seismic. Before long, bands like the Rolling Stones, the Byrds and the Hollies were working the instrument into their songs. By 1967, the instrument was so ingrained into psychedelic music that Danelectro was manufacturing several electric sitar models that could be played like a standard guitar.

But while the sitar was a fad for some, it was part of a larger spiritual journey for Harrison. "When I first consciously heard Indian music, it was as if I already knew it. When I was a child we had a crystal radio with long- and shortwave bands and so it's possible I might have already heard some Indian classical music. There was something about it that was very familiar, but at the same time, intellectually, I didn't know what was happening."

Toward the end of 1965, at a friend's suggestion, Harrison purchased an album of Indian music by sitar master Ravi Shankar. "I went out and bought a record, and that was it," he recalled. "I thought it was incredible." Harrison met Shankar in 1966 during one of the sitarist's London visits, and subsequently received lessons from him. Shankar not only became a lifelong friend of Harrison's but inspired him to pursue writing on the sitar, which resulted in Harrison writing three more songs—"Love You To," "Within You, Without You" and the groundbreaking "Lady Madonna" B-side, "The Inner Light"—that utilized Indian classical instrumentation.

AS THE BEATLES MOVED INTO their final years as a band, George Harrison was growing as a musician. Having indulged his interest in Indian music, he began veering off in an entirely new direction with his guitar playing. While his contemporaries like Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page developed a rock style based on traditional blues guitar, Harrison continued to look East for his inspiration, drawing the microtonal slurs and sustaining notes of the sitar into his guitar playing, eventually employing a slide guitar for a more fluid style.

"Whatever you listen to has to come out someway in your guitar playing," Harrison told *Guitar World* in 1997. "I do think Indian music influenced the inflection of how I play, and certain things I play have a similar feeling to the Indian style. Ravi Shankar did bring an Indian musician to my house once who played classical Indian music on a slide guitar. And, yeah, he did play runs that were precise and in perfect pitch but so quick. That was a real inspiration."

The change in Harrison's sound was due not only to his change in technique but to a change in equipment. In the early years of Beatlemania, Harrison mostly wielded a Gretsch Duo Jet and Rickenbacker Chet Atkins Country Gentleman and Tennessean. The warm twanging tones of the acoustic-electric guitars were well suited to the group's combination of rhythm and blues and country-western-inspired music. As of 1965, however, Harrison began to favor solidbody guitars, which delivered greater sustain. From *Rubber Soul* forward his guitars included a Gibson SG Standard, a Fender Stratocaster, a Fender Rosewood Telecaster and a Gibson Les Paul given to him by Eric Clapton, his friend since 1964.

As Harrison's guitar style came to maturation in the Beatles' final years, so did his songwriting. Between 1968 and 1970, he wrote some of his best and most popular songs, including "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," "Here Comes the Sun" and, his only Beatles song to be released as a single, "Something." Even so, Harrison still had to compete with Lennon and McCartney to get equal time for his songs.

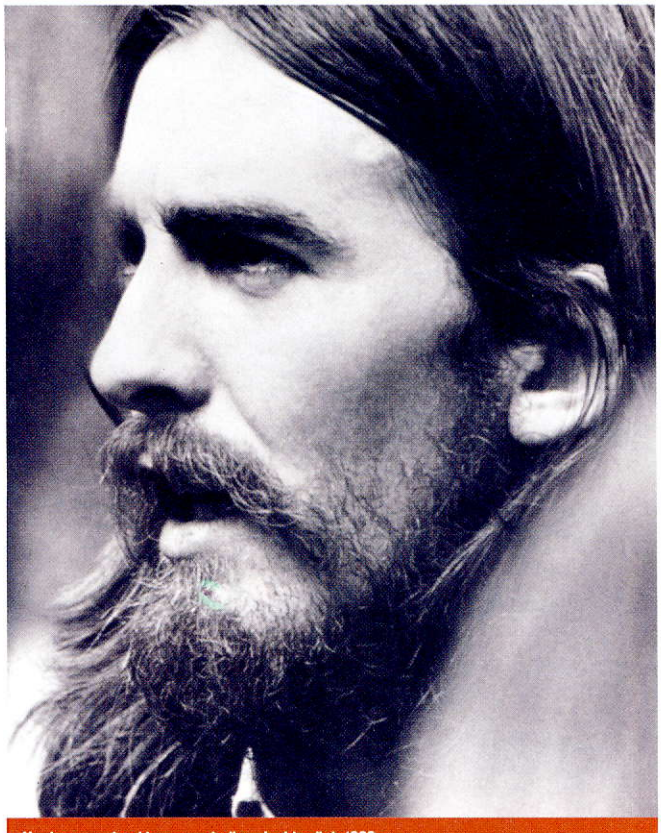
"It wasn't easy, sometimes, getting up enthusiasm for my songs," he said. "We'd be churning through all this Lennon/McCartney, Lennon/McCartney, Lennon/McCartney. Then I'd say, [*meekly*] 'Can we do one of these?' " When the group gave "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" a less-than-enthusiastic reception, Harrison put his foot down. "I thought, This is really a good song, it's not as if it's shit.' " The next day, he invited Clapton

ABOVE: HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS; BELOW: DEZO HOFFMANN / REX USA

to accompany the group in the studio to record the track. "Which he did. And everyone behaved and the song came together quite nicely."

BUT EPISODES OF DISCORD were becoming more frequent, and by 1970 the Beatles were history, torn apart by legal problems and each member's desire for greater autonomy. Even as the band members went their separate ways, it was Lennon and McCartney who continued to command the most attention, quickly releasing solo albums and carrying on a public spat both in the media and in their songs.

So it was a shock when Harrison turned out what is arguably the best—and at its original three-disc length, certainly the biggest—solo album by a former Beatle. Released in 1970, *All Things Must Pass* is Harrison's declaration of independence, a surfeit of introspective and quasi-religious songs—including "What Is Life?" "Wah Wah" and his smash debut single, "My Sweet Lord"—that showed how little the Beatles, in their final years,



Harrison came into his own musically and spiritually in 1969.

had utilized Harrison's growing talents as a songwriter.

To help him record this backlog of material, Harrison assembled an all-star backing group that included Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr and producer Phil Spector. Also present was a trio of musicians—keyboardist Bobby Whitlock, bassist Carl Radle and drummer Jim Gordon—who would in the following months join Clapton to record the rock milestone *Layla and Assorted Love Songs* under the name Derek and the Dominos.

"I was really a bit paranoid," Harrison said in 1975 about this time period. "There was a lot of negativism going down [*in the Beatles*]. I felt that whatever happened to my solo album, whether it was a flop or a success, I was going out on my own just to have a bit of peace of mind. For me to do my own album after that—it was joyous. Dream of dreams. Even before I started the album I knew I was going to make a good album because I had so many songs, so much energy."

Swept along by the success of "My Sweet Lord," *All Things Must Pass* reached No. 1 in Britain and the U.S. shortly after its release in late November 1970. From its suggestive title to its cover photo of Harrison surrounded by a quartet of reposing gnomes, *All Things Must Pass* signaled his emergence as a bona fide musician and songwriter.

As 1971 began, George Harrison was everybody's favorite former Beatle. His popularity reached an all-time high in August 1971 with the Concert for Bangladesh, a benefit to raise money for the then-territory of East Pakistan. A brutal military crackdown had led 10 million of its people to flee for India, resulting in a vast humanitarian crisis. Instigated by Harrison's old friend Ravi Shankar, the Concert for Bangladesh consisted of two benefit shows held on August 2, 1971, at New York City's Madison Square Garden. Among the musicians Harrison recruited were many familiar faces associated with *All Things Must Pass*, as well as one particularly special guest—Bob Dylan.

Harrison had met Dylan on several occasions in the early Sixties, when Dylan was a young folk-rock firebrand. Their bond was forged in 1968, when Harrison paid a visit to Dylan at his home in New York's Catskills. Increasingly private and withdrawn following a nearly fatal motorcycle accident in 1966, Dylan warmed to Harrison, and the two composed "I'd Have You Anytime," one of the many standout tracks on *All Things Must Pass*. He was still keeping a low profile at the time Harrison organized the Concert for Bangladesh, and though he made rehearsals for the show, Harrison didn't know until literally the last moment if Dylan would actually perform at the concerts.

"He never committed himself [to play] right up until the moment he came onstage," Harrison recalled. "I had a list, sort of a running order, that I had glued on my guitar. When I got to the point Bob was going to come on, I had 'Bob' with a question mark. I looked over my shoulder to see if he was around, because if he wasn't I would have to go on to the next bit. And I looked around, and he was so nervous—he had his guitar on and his shades. He was just coming! So I just said, 'My old friend Bob Dylan!' It was only at that moment that I knew for sure he was going to do it. Then we did the second show. And after the second show he picked me up and hugged me and he said, 'God! If only we'd done three shows!' "

The show and its subsequent concert album and film were a major success, raising 8 to 10 million dollars for the impoverished country. Unfortunately, legal wrangling kept the money tied up in an escrow account for years. Harrison had to comfort himself with the knowledge that he had, at the very least, put Bangladesh on the map of many Westerners' consciousness.

SURPRISINGLY, WHAT APPEARED TO BE a promising solo career for Harrison came slowly to a halt. He was still capable of producing the occasional hit, as he did with "Living in the Material World," "Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth)," "All Those Years Ago" and "Got My Mind Set on You." In 1988, he joined Dylan, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty and the Electric Light Orchestra's Jeff Lynne in the short-lived Traveling Wilburys, and cowrote the group's hit "Handle with Care." But for much of the Seventies and Eighties, Harrison refrained from making music. Instead, he indulged his interest in filmmaking, producing Monty Python's *Life of Brian* and the indie hit *Withnail and I*.

Harrison's last years were spent in semireclusion. He emerged for the Beatles' *Anthology* project, for which he teamed up with McCartney and Starr for "Real Love" and "Free as a Bird," a pair of songs written and recorded around two of the late John Lennon's demos. Likewise, he helped promote the group's 1999 *Yellow Submarine Songtrack*.

Sadly, in his final years, Harrison garnered headlines for his personal tragedies rather than for his music. In 1999 he was almost murdered by a deranged man who attacked him in his home with a knife and punctured his lung. A longtime smoker, Harrison overcame throat cancer in 1998, but in 2001 it was revealed that he had an inoperable form of brain cancer. Despite attempts to stave off the disease—including last-ditch efforts at radical treatment in New York City and Los Angeles—Harrison succumbed to it on the afternoon of November 29, 2001, while at a friend's house in Los Angeles.

It is our good fortune that much of his best work is readily available, including the Beatles' catalog and a selection of his solo albums. Harrison reissued an expanded and remastered version of *All Things Must Pass* in 2001, and a remastered *Concert for Bangladesh* album was released posthumously in 2005. His final album, *Brainwashed*, was released in November 2002, nearly a year to the day after his death.

In the tributes that followed his death, George Harrison was mourned as a gifted guitarist and musician, as a charitable man of God, and as one who, at 58, died too young. Undoubtedly, Harrison in his last days drew from the well of Indian religious philosophy that had given him strength and faith throughout much of his life. Over the years, he spoke many times of his belief in reincarnation and the grace with which he hoped to meet his fate. To those who grieve his demise, Harrison might have offered this passage from his 1980 autobiography, *I Me Mine*:

"Funny how people say: 'You've only one life, Squire.' I've given up saying 'You've got as many as you like and more, even ones you don't want.' But it's true. We have." ❖

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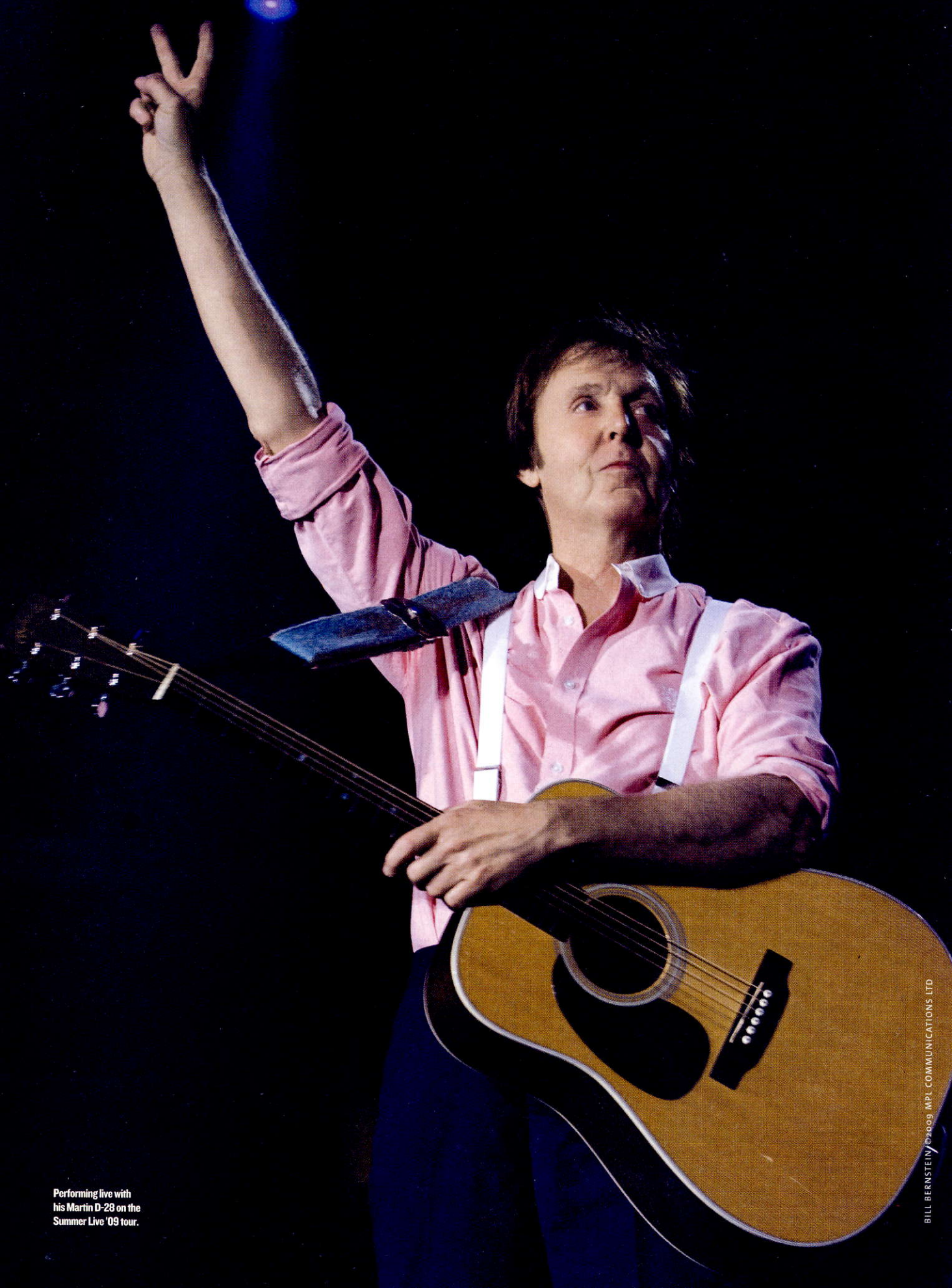

Performing live with his Martin D-28 on the Summer Live '09 tour.

BILL BERNSTEIN ©2009 MPL COMMUNICATIONS LTD

YESTERDAY & today

Paul McCartney *discusses some of his greatest acoustic songs, his unique playing style and his signature Epiphone Texan guitar.*

by HAROLD STEINBLATT

"YESTERDAY," PAUL McCARTNEY is singing, "all my troubles seemed so far away."

The date is August 14, 1965, and he is taping a performance before the cameras for *The Ed Sullivan Show*. As his fellow Beatles wait in the wings, Paul does it on his own with nothing but an Epiphone Texan acoustic guitar and an off-screen string quartet. When the show airs one month later on September 12, some 73 million people watch the performance—among them my brother James, who is 12, my cousin Goldie, just one year younger, and me, about to turn seven.

"This is so old-fashioned," James complains. "*Shh!*" says the awestruck Goldie, today a grandmother who staunchly denies that she ever collected Beatles cards. I say only, "It's such a pretty song."

I know that if I were to insert my present-day self into that scene, I would say something like, "He doesn't really have much of a fingerpicking technique, does he? His hands are all over the place." And, "He's playing an Epiphone guitar. He's a *Beatle*. Couldn't he afford a Gibson J-200 or some high-end Martin?" But I also would have admitted that McCartney's playing, for all its inelegance, was spot-perfect and beautifully conceived, with flowing chord changes effortlessly anticipated by bass runs.

The interesting thing is that while Paul McCartney himself, now in his sixties and a long way from "Yesterday," would relate more to the response of my juvenile self and pre-teen brother and cousin, he would to some extent agree with the hypercritical and elitist observations his performance would probably evoke from me today. I know because McCartney met with *Guitar World Acoustic* recently and, for the first time ever, offered a detailed assessment of his acoustic guitar playing—perhaps the one aspect of his, let's face it, miraculous talent that is underrated. Even as he spoke in considerable detail of some of the inventive and memorable acoustic guitar parts he played as a Beatle and in his solo career, he said things like, "You know, I'm not really technical," and, "I never learned the proper way of picking." With regard to his guitars, he insisted, "I was never really so concerned about the instrument as I was about the song."

It's usually the case that brilliant guitarists who denigrate some aspect of their playing or claim to be disinterested in their gear are as believable as baseball players who claim to "never watch the scoreboard" during a pennant race. You can believe McCartney, however, a man who indeed does not play the "right" way, and who hasn't filled his basement with rare and delectable guitars—or basses, for that matter. As for his overriding concern about the quality of his songs, his records speak for themselves.

Paul McCartney is a great acoustic guitarist the same way John Fogerty is a great electric player—while neither is a master technician, both are able to create melodic parts that take up permanent residence in the minds of their listeners. And like Fogerty's best solos, the ex-Beatle's accompaniments, from the harmonically sophisticated chords of "Michelle" to the celestial counterpoint lines of "Blackbird" to the wistful-sounding inversions of "Junk," were clearly devised for the sake of the song, to be integral parts of the whole.

While he has never been a "gearhead," McCartney was intimately involved in the creation by Gibson of a signature edition replica of his 1964 Epiphone Texan acoustic guitar in 2005, the instrument

he immortalized when he used it to perform "Yesterday" on the *Sullivan* show. But even there, McCartney became interested in the project only when he was told that a large percentage of the profits from sales of the guitar would benefit Adopt-A-Minefield, a charity he has long championed. He did it for the sake of a cause.

But now it is time to let Paul McCartney speak for himself.

Playing a Guild acoustic in 1964

GUITAR LEGENDS Gibson issued a replica of the Epiphone Texan acoustic guitar you used to record "Yesterday." What made you decide to give them the go-ahead?

PAUL McCARTNEY Actually, though I'd seen others do that sort of thing—signature guitars—it was just never anything I got involved with. But I believe it was the charity component—the money that's going to Adopt-A-Minefield—that made me think, That's a good thing. Then, after many years, I started to play the Texan again, using it on my tour, and I actually saw an old bit of footage of me playing it. I said to my guitar tech, John Hamell, "Wow, you know, it really is a pretty historic instrument." I don't ordinarily think of my instruments as historic; they're just my guitars. But seeing it up on the screen like that gave me a certain perspective about it. From then on, it just became kind of exciting, trying to re-create it. Then, while going back and forth on the guitar's preparation with Gibson, I realized that this whole thing is a pretty cool honor.

GL I understand that on a number of the guitars they reproduced every nick and ding you ever put on the original.

McCARTNEY [*laughs*] It's crazy, really. But the exciting thing for me is that they *play* well, these new guitars. In fact, I did say to Pat Foley, who ran the project for Gibson, "It's all very well getting the cracks and the crannies right, but I want it to be a guitar that sounds good." And it does.

GL It's interesting to me that in 1965, for the *Sullivan* show performance of "Yesterday," you chose to play a $175 Epiphone Texan...

McCARTNEY The terrible thing about me is that I got locked in a mindset that I picked up from my dad. He really ground it in me to never be in debt, because while we weren't on the poverty line, there wasn't much money to go around. So the first time I wanted a guitar, I bought an Epiphone Zenith 17 for 15 pounds [*about $40 in the mid Fifties*] on what the English used to call "the hire-purchase," which meant I had to pay such and such an amount every month. It sent a bit of a shudder through my dad—I could see the look of horror on his face, his sense of, "Whoo, that's debt!" He used to say, "Never get under an obligation to anyone." It was great advice, but it did lead to my always tending to look for a great instrument, yes, but one that was reasonably priced, even when I could afford stuff. It was many years before I ever got a Fender bass, even though I thought they sounded terrific. The Hofner I played, it was kind of symmetrical and looked good upside down, but I liked that it was also a well-priced thing. I think I saw the Epiphone the same way: they were never really top-of-the-line, but my dad had ingrained in me a certain way of thinking, and I don't think I've ever lost that.

GL Can you recall anything besides "Yesterday" that you wrote or recorded with the Texan?

McCARTNEY I'm a bit hopeless on all that—I actually can't remember what I wrote on what. I'm really the least technical guy ever, which can sometimes be a bit embarrassing. If I listened to a bunch of songs I might be able to say, "Yeah, that was that guitar on that," but really, I'm very sort of nonchalant about what I play; I just pick up what feels good on a given day. If I played a Martin yesterday, I may say, "Oh, I'll play the Epiphone today," or, "Wait a minute, let's get the Gibson Everly Brothers guitar out."

GL Let's talk about some of your greatest acoustic guitar-based Beatles songs—how they came to be written and how you play them. You have in the past asserted that the melody to "Yesterday" came to you in a dream. Did the fingerpicked guitar part also appear in the dream?

McCARTNEY [*laughs*] No, there was no guitar in the dream. It was just a tune, and when I woke I fell out of bed and went over to a piano nearby.

GL Do you usually write on piano?

McCARTNEY Either acoustic guitar or piano—it's kind of split between the two, I think.

GL You recorded "Yesterday" in the key of F, but lowered your strings a whole tone so you could play it in G. Was that because it made it easier to play the bass runs?

McCARTNEY That's one reason. Also, I think I just wanted to play it in G but that key was just a little too high to sing in. The other possibility is that F is a better key for the string quartet we used in the arrangement.

GL I recently saw footage from the *Sullivan* performance, and it struck me how unusual your fingerpicking technique was. The way you plucked the bass strings with your thumb and then sort of strummed the treble strings with your index finger reminds me a little of the way some old-time country guitarists played.

McCARTNEY A lot of people think I can do proper fingerstyle, but when you see me up close, you realize I can't. John and I particularly wanted to learn the formal style of fingerpicking, but I never got around to it. He did, and he used it on "Julia" and some other things. I never got into it, but I love the sound of it so much, I just figured out my own way of doing it; that's really how I learned every instrument I play. On things like "Yesterday" and "Blackbird" I just hit the bass string and sort of flick the high strings.

GL And that's how you always play acoustic guitar?

McCARTNEY I use a flatpick on more chordal stuff, but I did a bunch of that, yeah; it's my own goofball version of fingerpicking. The main drawback to my approach is that, because of the way I flick the chords and notes with my finger, it wears my nail down.

GL You don't appear to regard your fingerpicking skills all that highly, yet you somehow came up with "Blackbird," a fingerstyle masterpiece. How did you "dream" that one up?

McCARTNEY You know how when you're a kid, you learn these little show-off pieces? Well, George and I learned Bach's "Bouree in E minor." Actually, we just heard it a few times and bastardized it. I sort of borrowed its approach in "Blackbird," those kinds of intervals, and just made it up as it led on. It was the only time we ever got vaguely classical.

GL Perhaps you should have called the song "Bachbird"...

McCARTNEY [*laughs*] Hey, hey, hey—I like that, I will remember that.

GL "Michelle," another Beatles classic, features some fairly sophisticated chords. You grew up playing Fifties rock and roll—Elvis, Gene Vincent,

> "I'M NOT TOO FUSSY ABOUT GEAR. THE PLAYING AND THE SONG ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE EQUIPMENT."

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In the studio with his Martin D-28

Eddie Cochran. When and where did you learn, say, the second chord in Michelle—the F7♯9?

McCARTNEY First of all, Eddie Cochran was one of the most underrated guitarists around. But I'll tell you exactly where I learned that chord: from Jim Gretty, a salesman at Hessy's, a music shop in Liverpool. All the guys who worked in that store when we were kids were jazz guys; they had to play jazz well if they wanted to hold down their jobs. Gretty showed us jazz chords—that's exactly what we called 'em.

GL I know some jazz players who are offended when they're called "jazz" chords.

McCARTNEY Well, it's too bad, I'm afraid; I'm still going to call them that. You know, that F7♯9 is a beautiful chord, and it was outside our frame of reference—nothing that we listened to contained that chord. I remember me and George were in the guitar shop when Gretty played it, and we said, "Wow! What was *that*, man?" And he answered, "It's just basically an F, but you barre the top two strings at the fourth fret with your little finger. We immediately learned that, and for a while it was the only jazz chord we knew. Later we learned other chords from him.

GL How did your knowledge of those chords lead to your writing "Michelle"?

McCARTNEY I used to take a guitar along to parties and sort of sit enigmatically in a corner, hoping it would attract a girl. I remember that I actually pretended at one of these parties that I was French, you know, wore a black collar-necked shirt, and sort of enigmatically played this little fingerpicked instrumental that went like this: [*sings*] "Ding ding ding," and then that "*doon* din," which was Gretty's F chord with the pinkie barring the two strings at the fourth fret. Years later John said, "Remember that French thing you used to do? We should stick some words on that."

GL Let's return to the "White Album," which features more of your acoustic playing than any other Beatles record. "Mother Nature's Son" begins with a descending riff played over a partial chord on the treble strings. It's similar to the guitar intro to "Michelle," and variations of that same pattern can be found in "Junk," from your first solo album, and other songs.

McCARTNEY That chord sequence was just the kind of thing I heard growing up. My dad was very musical—he was a professional musician and used to play the piano at home—so I grew up musical, and I had a naturally musical ear. There were things I heard that I just fell in love with, and was sufficiently interested in and musical enough to go, "Wait a minute, what was that? Oh, I see what they're doing; just this one note in the chord is descending." So I'd figure it out and then it would become a favorite little thing of mine. And I inserted the kind of things I heard back then in my songs to sort of refresh things.

GL What kind of music did your father play?

McCARTNEY Well, it wasn't the skiffle, it wasn't the blues, it wasn't the rock and roll; it was standards—music I listened to from the day I was born. Things like "Stardust"—I really liked Hoagy Carmichael. And I still go back to a lot of that stuff, because it gives me variety in my writing, gives me places to go when I'm looking for a surprise.

GL How did you apply those little refreshing things when writing for the Beatles?

McCARTNEY Me and John would come in with our acoustics and start with E, A and B chords, and then we'd throw in, like, a C♯ minor seventh. It'd be very exciting—I still remember the palpable thrill of finding a chord that we hadn't used before. It can empower you to write five songs, or help make the one you're writing better.

GL The first two albums you released as a solo artist, *McCartney* [*1970*] and *Ram* [*1971*] were jam-packed with great acoustic guitar tunes, including "Junk," "Teddy Boy" and "Heart of the Country," and you also released [*the acoustic guitar–based*] "Another Day" as a single back then. Was there any particular reason that you went in such an unplugged direction?

McCARTNEY When I worked with the Beatles there were at least two guitars, and when I played there were three. We would often play a song through on acoustic, and sometimes we'd develop it from there on electric—or sometimes we just kind of liked it where it was, and it stayed acoustic. On those early solo albums I didn't have the guys I developed things up with—John and George—and so things often remained acoustic. Of course, I also liked how it sounded. [*laughs*]

GL Do you ever use altered tunings?

McCARTNEY I play everything in standard tuning, except that sometimes I'll lower the bass E string to D when I'm playing in D. You know, we have a performing arts school up in Liverpool, and in the prospectus of the music department I saw this item: "We'll show you the special tuning for 'Blackbird.' " And I thought, You'd better show *me* that, guys, before we go any further.

GL Do you recall any specific approach you took to recording the acoustic

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'STACHE IT! Playing an Ovation 12-string acoustic in concert with Wings during the mid Seventies

ANWAR HUSSEIN/LFI

guitar with the Beatles?

McCARTNEY You know, this is the truth, man—people analyze our stuff much more than we ever get around to. So you probably have a better answer to the question than I do.

GL Who were some of your favorite guitarists when you were growing up?

McCARTNEY Well, my interest in fingerpicking came from Chet Atkins. I remember a lot of us tried to learn "Trambone," an instrumental that's on an album of his called *Down Home*. Otherwise, I loved Carl Perkins, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and [*skiffle great*] Lonnie Donegan's guitarist, Denny Wright, who was fantastic. I liked acoustic folk playing by Woody Guthrie and Ramblin' Jack Elliott.

GL Were you ever a big country blues fan? Songs like "Three Legs" [*Ram*] and "Bip Bop," from your first album with Wings, *Wild Life*, have a rural-blues flavor about them.

McCARTNEY I listened a lot to Leadbelly, to all of those guys. But I never got stuck in one groove. One day it would be, "Oh, wow, Chuck Berry!" and the next, "Oh, wow, Scotty Moore!" I was a bit of a magpie, really, picking up various styles and gradually assimilating them. It's probably a bit of the same in my vocal thing, you know. I loved Elvis and sang some songs trying to be like him, but then I also had my Little Richard stuff.

GL In "Man We Was Lonely" [*from* McCartney], you sound like Buck Owens in the chorus and Paul McCartney in the verses—like you're doing a duet with Buck Owens.

McCARTNEY Actually, I thought of myself as Johnny Cash on that one. Johnny could have done that one right! I remember playing that to him and June, in fact.

GL What is your main acoustic these days?

McCARTNEY A Martin, but don't ask me for the serial number. It's one of my old ones.

GL You bought a D-28 in 1967. Is that the one?

McCARTNEY That's it. Actually, I have a few home bases and have an acoustic in all those places. I always have one waiting wherever I'll be.

GL How do you go about getting your acoustic sound in the studio these days?

McCARTNEY With the help of a great engineer [*laughs*]. And that's always been my advice to those who want to know how to get a great sound: Get yourself a great engineer. Seriously, they just put a mic up and I go, "That sounds nice." And if it doesn't, I might fiddle with it a bit but normally I credit the engineer.

Here's a story that shows how low-tech I really am: I went into an instrument store in New York, and this guy recognizes me and says, "Oh man, I'm a bass player, and I've always wanted to know what strings you use." And I swear I wasn't trying to be funny when I said, "Kind of long, shiny ones." And I actually don't know; it's not really important to me. I will play on anything and everything. I'm not too fussy about gear. The playing and the song are more important than the equipment.

GL Do you play much acoustic these days?

McCARTNEY Yep. Just last week, I finished up a few songs that are either acoustic- or piano-based.

GL You have a new album in the works?

McCARTNEY Next month I'm going to be in L.A. to do some recording. I'm doing an album that's being produced by Nigel Godrich [*Radiohead*]. But we're not looking to release anything until this time next year.

GL How would you characterize the level of your enthusiasm for music these days?

McCARTNEY You know, I'm still excited about what I do—I love it. I think the tour in America that started with the Concert for New York [*the 9/11 benefit held October 20, 2001*] really sort of revitalized me. The American audience has been so cool, so warm and informed, and receptive. It doesn't just encourage me to play live but to write as well. ❖

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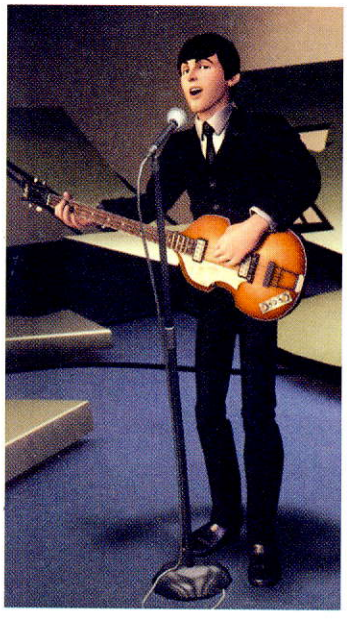
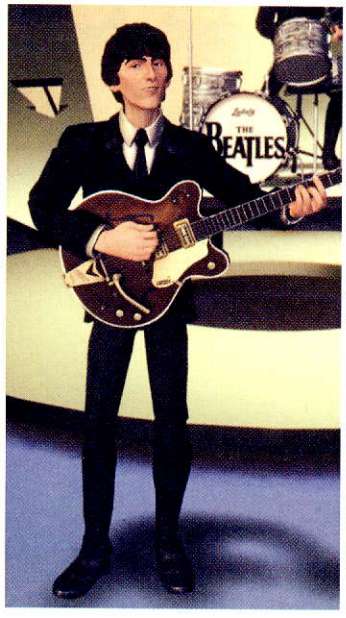
One of the "Dreamscape" settings Harmonix created for The Beatles: Rock Band that places the group in worlds suggested by the music

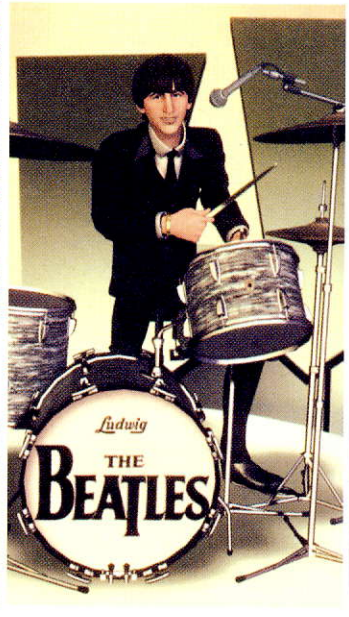
COME TOGETHER

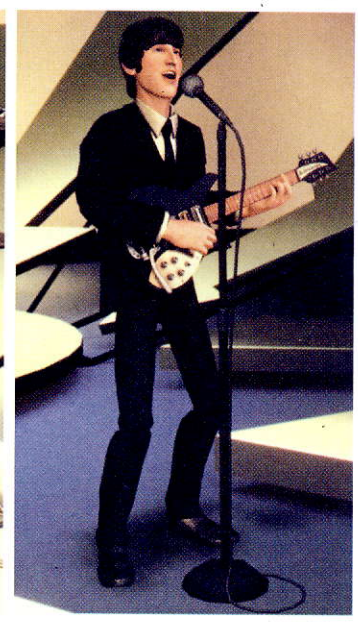
The Fab Four *shift from the past to the future in* The Beatles: Rock Band, *the music video game that bridges a generation gap some 40 years wide.*

by DAN AMRICH









WHEN SOMEONE ASKS, "What's so great about the Beatles?" there's no easy answer. They wrote some of the most expertly crafted songs of all time. They were pioneers of the stadium rock concert, the concept album and sampling in popular music. They're perhaps the main reason why rock music is seen as artistically valid today. Historically, culturally and musically, their significance is almost too big to put into words.

Harmonix, the music video game developer behind *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, can explain it best using no words at all. After exposing new generations of gamers to the power of rock music through those two products, Harmonix set its sights on music's most prized license, and the result is *The Beatles: Rock Band*, which puts the music, culture and history of the Fab Four into the hands and minds of gamers like nothing else before it.

YOUR MOTHER SHOULD KNOW

EVEN THOUGH the game (available for Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Wii) costs $60 (or $250 for a bundle that includes a microphone, a digital drum kit and a replica of Paul McCartney's Hofner bass), it's an easy sell to dedicated Beatles fans. But what about all those gamers whose heroes aren't British rockers? Harmonix is betting that their appreciation simply lies dormant. Says Harmonix creative director Josh Randall, "Here's the biggest band in the world. You know all the songs, you know all the lyrics. I kind of dare people to play one or two songs in this game and not wind up with a smile on their face."

The developer is also aware that kids might see the Beatles as ancient history. "This is the game your parents are going to want to play with you...which is not, like, the coolest tag line," Randall admits with a laugh. "But all of our games are about bringing people together."

Adds Chris Foster, the game's lead designer, "I think it's very popular to not like the Beatles in that 'Oh yeah, that's my dad's band' way. But on the other hand, I've been amazed by how many eight-, 11- or 13-year-olds get it. This music is like the air people breathe. It's surrounded them. It's part of everything."

If that sounds a bit cosmic, consider the magnitude of this undertaking. The Beatles have never thrown themselves at technology to make a buck; you can't even buy their recordings as digital downloads. For their company, Apple Corps, to hand over the prized master recordings to a videogame developer isn't just the ultimate vote of confidence for the musicians at Harmonix—it's also a brilliant way for a 40-year-old band with nothing left to prove to take new, culturally relevant creative risks. Video game fans have been screaming that electronic games can do important things that no other form of artistic expression can do, but the Beatles seem willing to prove it.

AND YOUR BIRD CAN SING

AT ITS CORE, *The Beatles: Rock Band* delivers what you would expect: the chance to play along with songs like "Day Tripper" and "I Am the Walrus" on new plastic guitars and drum controllers (see sidebar). From John and George's jangly guitar parts to Paul's melodic bass lines to Ringo's solid, serves-the-song drum beats, you get to play 45 original tracks from the Beatles' remarkably prolific seven-year, 12-album career, in chronological order. You'll start at a digital re-creation of the Liverpool Cavern Club, playing along with early hits like "Twist and Shout" and "I Saw Her Standing There," and wind up on the rooftop of Apple Studios crooning "Dig a Pony" and "Get Back."

But the goal was never simply to deliver the "play along with the mop-tops" experience. "Meeting with Apple, they were just like, 'You guys need to do something new,' " Randall says. "That was the mandate: do new stuff. We didn't want to make it a history lesson, but I think we did a good job of giving you splashes of history. For the game's story mode, we came up with this idea of a photo gallery. If you're able to get a high enough score, you unlock a piece of memorabilia with a tidbit of info. We hung out in Apple's archive department for three days and pored over stacks of books and photos that we'd never seen before. So as you're playing, you'll get a little more in-depth history that way. But we don't force it on people. If you want, you can go there and hang out. If not, you can just rock out."

But Harmonix also wanted to push the music genre forward, to make *Rock Band* even more inclusive than it already was. "Early on, we decided we wanted to have this game give everybody in the room something to do," Randall says. "And the more we got into the Beatles' music, the more we realized that the thing that was really unique was the harmonies." The answer: have three microphones, one for each vocal part. Whereas regular *Rock Band* offers a single vocal line to follow, most songs in *Beatles* will show harmony lines as well, each in a different color. And if you can't find your part, that's okay too. "Three people with microphones can sing whatever they hear," Foster says. "They could all sing the same line and

"THIS IS THE GAME ***YOUR PARENTS ARE GOING TO WANT TO PLAY WITH YOU...*** WHICH IS NOT THE COOLEST TAG LINE. BUT OUR GAMES ARE ABOUT BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER." —***JOSH RANDALL***

it would be okay, as long as someone's singing. But they can maximize their points by going to the three parts."

Of course, identifying a harmony, let along singing it, is hard enough, which is why the game's interactive vocal trainer was created. It lets you swap between all three vocal lines at will using the left and right triggers. Since the backing vocals overlap on the original four-track recordings, they couldn't be isolated. Instead, the trainer plays notes at the correct pitches, so you know what to follow. "If someone wants to be really good, they can sit with the game in practice mode and learn *their* part," Foster says. It works amazingly well. You may have heard "Here Comes the Sun" hundreds of times, but there's a good chance you've never deconstructed the harmonies correctly. One pass through with the trainer and you'll nail it. Foster says, "We spent months and months on that."

I'VE JUST SEEN A FACE

MEANWHILE, the art team spent the bulk of its energy on getting the musicians' likenesses just right. "We knew we didn't want to go too realistic and have it be weird looking, but we didn't want them to be cartoony either," says Dare Matheson, lead artist on the project. "There's a ton of emotion and personality that everybody recognizes when they look at those faces, so that was our main challenge: to bring those four very distinctive personalities to these digital puppets. It was very tricky—and scary."

It's even scarier when you realize you're creating a digital Ringo Starr for Ringo himself to approve. "Josh and I went to Abbey Road with our first version of George [*Harrison*]'s head," Lesser says. "We showed Apple, and we were pretty psyched about it. We thought he looked really good, and it was stylized the right way. And they just kicked the crap out of me. It was brutal, but it was really good. They got to see our process, and we got to see where people's cares lie. And from then on, it got a lot better. We had a sense of what we needed to do and where we needed to go."

The result was subtle, true-to-life animations for all the characters in the game, from the band members interacting onstage to the crowds screaming and watching the show. Central to the emotional impact is something that Lesser calls "the joy filter." "When you look at the footage of the Beatles playing, they were super-psyched all the time," he says. "It was complete chaos sometimes, but they definitely had an excitement on their face. And Dare and Josh noticed that that wasn't in our game yet, so we built new systems to add that on top of what was going on. We have a totally different, weird set of criteria for our systems. Joy isn't on the list of ingredients for most videogames."

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

IN ADDITION to iconic celebrities, Harmonix had to re-create famous venues, including the Cavern Club, where the Beatles were discovered; the CBS TV studio, where they made their American television debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*; America's Shea Stadium and Japan's famed Budokan martial arts arena; and the rooftop of Apple Studios, where the Beatles played their impromptu final gig. What's more, having access to Apple's photo archives meant Harmonix got to build these venues better than anyone even remembers them. Lesser says, "When we started working on the project, there was one photograph of the *Sullivan* set in color, which I had never seen before, and I've seen that footage a million times. It's shockingly beautiful, with all these blues and yellows and soft ambient lighting. Back then they tended to

Fab Gear

Harmonix hits the right notes with its new controllers for The Beatles: Rock Band.

AFTER ALL THE WORK HARMONIX put into making *The Beatles: Rock Band* feel so authentic, it would be a shame to play the video game using any old standard controller. Fortunately, the company has created four new instrument controllers, one for each of the Fabs. Guitarists can choose between replicas of George Harrison's black Gretsch Duo Jet and John Lennon's Jetglo Rickenbacker 325 at $100 each. Both sport chromed plastic appointments, a solid feel (the Bigsby vibrato arm on the Gretsch is a real treat), and playability that's arguably more comfortable than the *Rock Band 2* Fender Stratocaster replica, which was no slouch. And while the guitars feature whammy bars, using them won't actually change the note's pitch as it does in other music games. This is the Beatles, after all; you don't wiggle perfection out of tune.

Harmonix also offers controllers based on Paul's iconic Hofner violin bass and Ringo's Ludwig drum kit—basically the existing *Rock Band 2* kit with white drum pads, an accurate Black Oyster Pearl finish around the edges, a logo-stamped metal kick pedal, and a replica drum head with the Beatles logo on it. But to get them, you'll have to pony up the $250 for the special-edition bundle, as those instruments are not sold separately. But if you're looking to put on your own rooftop concert, it's hard to resist. —*Dan Amrich*

(from top) Game controllers based on Lennon's Rickenbacker 325, McCartney's Hofner, Harrison's Gretsch Duo Jet and Starr's Ludwig drum set

Historic performance settings were recreated for *The Beatles: Rock Band*, including (here) Japan's Budokan Hall and (below) the Liverpool Cavern Club, where the group got its start.

paint all kinds of things yellow because it 'read' better on black-and-white TV. So that's something I think will hit people. If I play this for my folks, who taught me about the Beatles in the first place, they'll see that for the first time."

But the Beatles' most celebrated work was recorded after they stopped touring in 1966, and for most of those songs there was no context in which to place the group other than Abbey Road Studios, where nearly all of their recordings took place. Randall says, "So we had this challenge: They're just going to be in the studio for a ton of songs. What are we going to do?"

Their answer was to create "Dreamscapes," fantasy journeys to the worlds suggested by the song themselves. "As the band is playing in Abbey Road, the walls melt away and you get transported to a new place that's based on the song," Randall explains. "Those range from super-psychedelic scenes to modern-motion graphics to fantasy landscapes. This is something entirely new that we've never done in any of our games."

Adds Lesser, "It's not like you're watching a cartoon or a video of a song; we've created abstract spaces that are more emotive." For instance, "Octopus's Garden" features fanciful underwater surroundings, while "Back in the U.S.S.R." is a playful take on the Cold War past, featuring lots of Soviet imagery. During "I Am the Walrus," the band members slowly transform into their animal alter egos from the cover of *Magical Mystery Tour*, surrounded by twisted scenes that draw on the song's nonsensical lyrics and foreboding orchestration. It's dark and unsettling.

I'VE GOT A FEELING

IN FACT, if *The Beatles: Rock Band* has a secret weapon, it's emotion. Lesser cites "the intimacy with the music" and the ability "to hear and feel every track" as big hooks for skeptical gamers. Chris Foster says his first Dreamscape experience "was *moving*—and that was not something I expected, and I'm one of the people that was helping design what we do. I think we're creating the emotions of making the music, of trying to put the listener there. The game feels mature; it feels grown-up. It's not stodgy or boring, but it's as close to an artistic statement as I think I'm ever going to get to work on."

Adds Randall, "I really want this game to feel like it was made by the Beatles. We're trying to be as authentic as possible. We're going to be reintroducing the Beatles to a whole new generation of people. And when they play this game, I'm hoping they just *get* it." ❖

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